City of Modernity. Łódź

Edited by
Katarzyna Badowska, Tomasz Cieślak,
Krystyna Pietrych, and Krystyna Radziszewska

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Introduction

Katarzyna Badowska, Tomasz Cieślak, Krystyna Pietrych, Krystyna Radziszewska

Modernist Łódź is a true aesthetic and political challenge, a city of paradoxes: filthy, poor and neglected, and, at the same time, ostentatiously rich; socially backward and yet employing cutting-edge methods of production. A community that saw an explosion of emancipatory ferment whose key political chord sounded with the Revolution of 1905–1907 which started far away in the Russian interior and bubbled up in a number of Polish cities, but whose bloodiest and most violent chapter unfolded in Łódź. It set in motion an important process of gradual change which in Łódź was marked by infrastructural development and cultural shifts paving the way towards modernity. But it was only at the end of the Second Polish Republic that Łódź became a sort of regional metropolis. One of the most important consequences of the revolution was the relative expansion of civic liberties as well as changes to the law on pre-emptive censorship. The abolition of the latter in favour of repressive censorship made it easier to obtain permission to publish new periodicals. The development of the press meanwhile contributed to the dissemination of new ideas and increased participation in public life. Dailies in Polish, Russian, German, Yiddish, and Hebrew came out, reaching large audiences. The press was a forum for debates on the desired shape of society; it covered important political, social, and cultural events, ideological controversies, mores, emancipation, and modernisation.

A careful look at the social and cultural life of Łódź in the nineteenth century and over the first four decades of the twentieth makes it possible to identify peculiar features of the Polish – and more broadly, Central European – road towards modernity.

The first wave of the Industrial Revolution did not immediately reach the Polish lands whose economy had for centuries been an agrarian one and was still agriculture-centred at the dawn of the nineteenth century. It was not until after the Congress of Vienna in 1815 that efforts to modernise the country were made by the authorities of the territorially diminished Polish Kingdom dependent on Russia. It is at this time that Łódź became the most important and – from a social and cultural standpoint – extraordinarily interesting new centre of production, employing the newest technical inventions and work planning methods. By an administrative decision (made chiefly due to easy access to water from the nearby rivers), an industrial settlement was established, practically *ex nihilo*, next to an insignificant agricultural townlet founded in the Middle Ages. Work and a place to live were available there both to settlers from the German-speaking countries, Bohemia, and Moravia, as well as the offspring of Polish peasants, Jews, and newcomers from the far reaches of the Russian Empire.

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The extraordinarily fast pace at which this new settlement developed into a vast industrial centre producing largely for the absorbent Russian market had no parallel in Central Europe. The demographic growth of Łódź over the first 100 years of its existence until the outbreak of the First World War was practically unrivalled in any other part of the world (the city population grew 600 times), which entailed an immense social cost, as infrastructure and social institutions lagged far behind. In light of this, Łódź is an iconic example of peripheral modernism – over the following decades its production grew dramatically, as did capital returns, but it still could not become a modern urban centre. For a long time Polish artists and journalists saw Łódź as something "foreign": it was at odds with the traditional model of farm-bound Polishness, because members of other ethnicities who did not always speak Polish long played a leading role there, and – because it spawned its own type of person, the *Lodzermensch*, said to be primitive and ruthless in pursuing personal gain – the very opposite of the Polish ideal of the upstanding noble (and subsequent intellectual), who was a patriot always ready to sacrifice for the nation, a readiness all the more glorified during the partition period.

The Łódź phenomenon has been studied for quite some time, as seen in recent publications: the monograph *From Cotton and Smoke: Łódź – Industrial City and Discourses of Asynchronous Modernity 1897 – 1994* (2018),[1] Agata Zysiak's article "The desire for fullness.The fantasmatic logic of modernization discourses in the turn of the 19th century in Łódź" (2014),[2] Andreas Kossert's "'Promised Land?' Urban Myth and the Shaping of Modernity in Industrial Cities: Manchester and Lodz" (2006),[3] and Stanisław Liszewski's "The Origins and Stages of Development of Industrial Łódź and Łódź Urban Region" (1997).[4] The studies and essays in this book return to, or indeed address for the first time, the principal issues relating to Łódź as a provincial modernist city, analysing it from various perspectives and also looking at their overlap and complementary features. It is crucial to analyse the circumstances that impacted the development of the city; first and foremost are the political circumstances, especially the international nature of the city, situated at the periphery of the Russian Empire and, subsequently, after Poland regained independence in 1918, one of the major urban centres of the reborn Polish state. It is also vital to examine the nature of complicated local relations, especially emancipation movements, the context of enormous economic disparities. Łódź was one of the first

1 A. Zysiak, K. Śmiechowski, K. Piskała, W. Marzec, K. Kaźmierska, J. Burski, *From Cotton and Smoke: Łódź – Industrial City and Discourses of Asynchronous Modernity 1897–1994*, Wydawnictwo UJ, Łódź–Kraków, 2018. Polish edition: *Z bawełny i dymu. Łódź – miasto przemysłowe i dyskursy asynchronicznej nowoczesności 1897–1994*, Łódź, 2021.

2 A. Zysiak, "The desire for fullness. The fantasmatic logic of modernization discourses at the turn of the 19th and 20th century in Łódź," *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 2014, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 41–69.

3 A. Kossert, "'Promised Land?' Urban Myth and the Shaping of Modernity in Industrial Cities: Manchester and Lodz," in *Imagining the City*, eds C. Emden, C. Keen, D. Midgley, Peter Lang GmbH, Bern, 2006, vol. 2: *The Politics of Urban Space*, pp. 169–191.

4 S. Liszewski, "The Origins and Stages of Development of Industrial Łódź and Łódź Urban Region," in *A comparative study of Łódź and Manchester: Geographies of European cities in transition*, eds S. Liszewski, C. Young, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź, 1997, pp. 11–34.

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Polish cities to boast an organized workers' movement – both leftist and Catholic nationalist. Łódź was also, quite literally, a city of women due to the nature of work in the city's main industry: textiles. It was a city of many religions and, until 1939, of several co-existing linguistic, ethnic, and cultural communities. The modernising efforts made in Łódź involved searching for new ways of organizing the city's architectural space and gradually building the necessary infrastructure to make it into a modern urban centre (public buildings, electric power plants, tram lines, sewage, and waterworks).

The literature about Łódź at various stages of its development is an extremely varied and interesting phenomenon. Writers and journalists made numerous attempts to define Łódź, and since the dynamic, multi-ethnic, and multi-denominational city could not be conceptualised in a clear-cut manner, metaphors were often used to describe its peculiarity, such as "cotton town," "chimney town," "promised land," "evil city," "sooty Cinderella," etc. On the eve of the Second World War, the poet Grzegorz Timofiejew said that Łódź was a mystery that still puzzled minds, like the Sphinx.

The modern character of Łódź was evidenced by its rapid industrialisation, linked to technical progress and the mechanisation of production. This is why the press often referred to Łódź as the "Polish Manchester," Manchester being the hub of the Industrial Revolution in England, and England the centre of the civilised world in the nineteenth-century. The comparison was largely owed to the textile monoculture of both cities as well as their equally brutal capitalist ways. Writers like Władysław Stanisław Reymont in his renowned novel *Promised Land*, emphasised the truly American pace at which Łódź was developing, devoting much attention to symptoms of modernisation, such as crowds, masses, movement, and their corollaries: rushing, nervousness, being exposed to countless stimuli.

Literary representations of the perceptual experience associated with the modern city are extremely rich, as seen in the essays in this volume. The dominant sensory themes of Łódź are often highlighted in novels and newspapers: factory smoke, fog, soot, gutters coloured by dyes from nearby dyeworks. As it turns out, modernity can also be heard and experienced organically. Because industrial buildings were right next to homes and commercial establishments, the humming of machines and the sound of factory whistles insinuated themselves into private spaces and made the entire city vibrate, creating an overwhelming sensation of ceaseless motion, shaking, and knocking. Even the structure of Władysław Reymont's novel mirrors modernity, understood as overcrowding, hurry, and commotion. While such sensations were treated as "auditory violence" at the end of the nineteenth century, twentieth-century writers were more apt to see them as a sign of vitality. In an effort to normalize urban noise and clamour, they would often aestheticise it (which even gave rise to a movement known as bruitism).

Literature set in Łódź was also a great barometer of its multiculturalism, as Łódź had largely been founded thanks to German settlers who arrived as qualified weavers. The city's multi-ethnicity was accentuated in the first pieces devoted to it, like Wiktor Dłużniewski's 1857 drama *Wyprawa do Ameryki* (Journey to America) or Waleria Marrené-Morzkowska's novel *Wśród kąkolu* (Among the Cockles), published in 1890. However, cosmopolitanism was not always seen in a good light due to Poland's political

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situation under the partitions. At the same time, multiculturalism bore fruit not just in the form of interesting literary creations, like the trio of friends who start a factory in Reymont's *Promised Land*, but also the linguistic phenomenon of heteroglossia and the emergence of hybrid language forms as a result of interethnic mixing.

The first pieces and reportages on Łódź were written by fascinated authors from other cities. For a long time, the city could not boast of its own artistic community, including writers, mainly due to its asynchronous development. But once one emerged, it had a distinctly avant-garde character – testimony of its innovative approach to art. And unlike the majority of other big cities in Poland, periodicals and literary groups were founded by artists and writers who came from working-class and lower middle-class backgrounds with a strong leftist worldview.

Although literature has chiefly recorded a dystopian image of Łódź, owing largely to Reymont's *Promised Land*, the myth of the "evil city" can be dispelled by telling a different history of nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century Łódź as an unprecedented example of bringing to life daring urban visions, considering the Polish Manchester's leading role in the country's plan of industrial modernisation. This way of looking at things was quite noticeable in interwar art. Especially for the avant-garde, Łódź was a cosmopolitan community and fertile soil for the international avant-garde movement along with its universalistic visual idiom. The choice of Łódź as a laboratory of ultra-progressive avant-garde thought during the interwar period, as seen in the constructivism practised by the a.r. group, was not a coincidence. Earlier, at the turn of the century, "art" in Łódź referred to mass-produced paintings imported from abroad – often oleographs filled in with portraits done from photographs. Paintings, and more often copies, were placed in bookshop windows. There were no exhibitions, no art salons. Artists struggled financially. Many left the country to seek employment abroad.

It is this provincial town that welcomed a true treasure of avant-garde art in 1931 – the International Collection of Modern Art. The public could discover works by artists representing currents like cubism, futurism, constructivism, purism, neoplasticism, and surrealism. This is how the a.r. group realised its most important objective: bringing the achievements of the international avant-garde to society. It was a significant artistic collection, and it kept growing (it consisted of 21 items in 1931, and by 1939 it had grown to 113). It is something of a paradox that it was the cosmopolitan ambiance of Łódź and the *Lodzermensch* ethos that made it possible for the collection to come to public attention here, paving the way for the universalism and cosmopolitanism of the avant-garde. Thus, the history of art began to arrange itself into an optimistic story of progress, as the evolution of art consisted in moving away from epigonic, kitschy painting towards modernist avant-garde experiments like Władysław Strzemiński's unism – the final stage in post-cubist abstraction. Strzemiński's artistic practice was a total, all-encompassing one. His "pure" art went hand in hand with designing applied forms (typography, textiles, furniture, interiors, architecture, urban planning). As a result, Strzemiński turned unism into a tool of social modernisation, positing a complete overhaul of the city, essentially building it anew from scratch according to avant-garde principles, replacing the city's nineteenth-century industrial architecture with newly designed modernist

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housing complexes. This radical and indeed utopian project to functionalize the entire urban territory stemmed not from the avant-garde's predilection for abstraction, but also from Strzemiński's personal experience as a resident of Łódź, whose space was ready to be transformed and therefore fitting to be built over in accordance with new rules, preparing it for change – including social change – in the future, for ushering in a new world by discarding the old. The city authorities, who hailed from leftist movements connected with the avant-garde idea, promoted this direction of modernising the city space. Modern housing complexes were built, and modernist architectural solutions were implemented at the Józef Montwiłł Mirecki Social Housing Estate.

But avant-garde activity had already found an outlet in Łódź during a period that predated the a.r. group. February 1919 saw the official founding of the group Yung Yidish, consisting of painters, poets, graphic artists, and theatre people. The idea was to enliven the petrified cultural life of the Jewish community. The group was active at a time when new currents were emerging in world art, especially expressionism, which informed the Yung Yidish aesthetic to a considerable degree. The Yung Yidish artists experimented with new ways of expressing traditional Jewish themes. They wanted to redefine Jewish identity, by aligning itself closely with the Yiddish language, modern lifestyles, and modernism. Yiddish, for decades treated as a common tongue, a "jargon," became the language of choice for these avant-garde artists and a statement of their attachment to Jewish culture. The Yung Yidishist artists wanted to create new art based on Jewish tradition, but using new expressive tools. They called for shifting the balance from the sacred to the profane. Art was to be a secular form of expression because it operated in a world of violent civilisational change to which other ways of manifesting Jewishness, based chiefly on a religious foundation, were no longer suited. The group's publications also featured a clear female voice in Jewish poetry and art, previously dominated by men. The group was not active for a long time (1919–1921), but it was an incredibly intense period in young Jewish art in Łódź which impressed itself on art and literature in Łódź and far beyond, reaching two continents – Europe and America. Yung Yidish is evidence of the fact the interwar avant-garde in Poland also had a very important Jewish wing.

But the artistic character of Łódź on the eve of modernity was not shaped by avant-garde undertakings belonging to high intellectual modernism. Although it put forward a radical platform of social transformation, the avant-garde only did this much later, during the interwar period, and its sphere of influence was limited to the elites. As Łukasz Biskupski has pointed out, diagnosing the situation at the beginning of the twentieth century: "At last an autonomous field of modern mass commercial entertainment led by sensation novels and later by cinema, emerged. (…) The development of popular culture was the outcome of dynamic modernisation processes: urbanisation, industrialisation, the spread of readership and the appearance of free time in the context of capitalist paid labour. Popular forms of entertainment became an important ingredient of this new 'urban' lifestyle."[5]

5 Ł. Biskupski, *Miasto atrakcji. Narodziny kultury masowej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku,* Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Warszawa, 2013, p. 19.

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In the second half of the nineteenth century and at the beginning of the twentieth, Łódź theatre was the scene of all types of merriment, a seasonal affair, or an impresario-type endeavour with the ambition of putting on systematic professional performances. There is no doubt that star performances were the most popular theatrical events in the city in the nineteenth century. The daily repertoire of Łódź theatres was spearheaded by commercial entertainment and chiefly consisted of light musical performances, so beloved not just among people of Łódź, but of residents of all big cities in the West as modernism spread. It was an art form initially imported by the town's early German settlers who brought to Łódź a taste for entertainment typical of the industrial towns of the second half of the nineteenth century: panopticons, "magic theatres," curiosity shows, panoramas, and circus performances. One of the most popular theatrical forms of the nineteenth and early twentieth century was operetta. It was the German upper middle class who often travelled to Berlin and Vienna who became the chief promoters of Western-style modernisation in Łódź. And one of the imports from that modern world was musical theatre. What is important is that this modern theatrical consumption practice was democratic and supranational. Operetta, also widely enjoyed by audiences in Berlin and Łódź, was criticised as a genre without content, limited to form – a type of momentary and meaningless entertainment. As a matter of fact, modern operetta, a global cosmopolitan product of the entertainment industry, promoted an attitude of consumption, but also conveyed specific ways of viewing modernity and talking about it, helping the public gain a better understanding of the complex and complicated reality of the twentieth century. At the same time, Jewish theatre was going through a rough patch. Its dynamic development from the *purimshpile*, plays on Biblical themes, to the secular-themed performances of the 1870s was cut short by a ban on Yiddish-language performances introduced in 1883. The police and censorship restrictions were loosened in 1905, which opened up the possibility of setting up a full-time Jewish theatre stage in Łódź. Jews also regularly attended Polish and German theatres, where they made up a substantial proportion of the audience.

Another dynamically developing art form in Łódź were comics. During the interwar period, as many as 15 original comic strips were published in just one local daily, which shows the incredible popularity and attractiveness of this genre among readers. Comics were doubtless an answer to the challenges of modernity; they were also conducive to the popularisation of art and to the creation of new art genres that appealed to a broad readership. During the interwar period, the Łódź press was (aside from the Kraków press) a precursor in terms of employing this genre, so popular in the West. In addition to providing entertainment, comics also modelled certain kinds of twentieth-century attitudes, quite different from traditional ones, for example by promoting modern patterns of femininity and showcasing women who were proactive and self-aware. The development of comics in the Łódź press ushered in the expansion of the genre across the whole country.

The expansion of mass entertainment was an integral part of modernisation. The next stage in this process was the commercialisation of the cinematograph which led to a substantive shift in popular culture as cinema rose to ascendency, marginalising earlier

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forms like varieté shows or cabinets of curiosities, and becoming a mass medium. The popularity of cinema which we see increasing over the first four decades of the twentieth-century in Łódź – a big industrial centre and at the same time a peripheral city – was part and parcel of worldwide changes in cultural production which accompanied the experience of modernity. In the interwar period, cinema became a form of vernacular modernism, since it helped the masses of modern men and women feel at home in the modern world in which changes and reconfigurations occurred with extraordinary speed. Cinema supplied models of identity, showing people how to be modern, but also to some degree helped people accommodate what appeared to be the threats of modernity. The aesthetics of shock and attraction reflected the intense and variable experience of living in a big modern city. Mass participation in global film circulation, watching the same stories and the worldview they conveyed, brought local viewers into the universal system of fashions and ideas, and consequently led to the globalisation of consciousness.
The music activities of Lodzers were initially mostly conducted within German associations and singing societies like the Łódź German Singing Society (Lodzer Männer Gesangverein). Numerous German choirs had more liberty to organise themselves and were supported by German factory owners. The singing societies Echo, Lutnia, and Lira were founded by the Polish community. The Hazomir Jewish Music and Literary Society played a vital role in the lives of Jews. The group's soloists and choir sometimes gave concerts with the Łódź Symphony Orchestra. The orchestra, established in 1914, was an offshoot of the war, a kind of rescue platform to "prevent the misery rampant among Łódź musicians".[6] Over the years the institution became an important establishment where renowned artists performed and conducted. Its members – before they left the city – included a number of Lodzers recognised worldwide. One of the most highly rated conductors in the world, Paweł Klecki, was the youngest person to conduct the Berliner Philharmoniker. Another Lodzer, Aleksander Tansman, also performed with the Łódź Symphony Orchestra. He was the first composer (alongside Szymanowski) to use polytonality, the use of two or more keys in a composition, as early as 1915. Tansman combined Polish folklore with traditional Jewish music and the most recent compositional devices of the era. Artur Rubinstein was another Łódź native who popularised Polish music all over the world.
These examples from theatre, comics, cinema, and music show the multi-faceted nature of vernacular modernism which turned Łódźers into both recipients and contributors to the modern symbolic universe. To understand the modern dimension of different varieties of popular culture we must not see their role as limited to pure entertainment but underscore their extremely important role in shaping society and culture. Pop culture was the perfect medium to convey the increasingly hard-to-understand and conflicted reality of the twentieth century. On the one hand, sensation novels, operetta, comics, or film offered an escape from reality, but they also provided insights into that same reality, often not shying away from commenting on major social and political issues. Signs of modern reality in mass culture could be read on different levels. In this manner,

6 F. R. Halpern, "Łódź a muzyka," *Giewont* 1928, no. 3, p. 110.

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thoroughly commercialised and globalised entertainment, a reflection of mass identity, became a vehicle of cultural policy, and, as a product of its times, impacted the shape of modern societies.

In Łódź, a big industrial centre developing on the outskirts of the Western world, art could be found at two extremes. On one side were the achievements of the avant-garde who pursued a high-art modernism addressed to the elite, even though their stated aim was a universal reach and content that applied to everyone. On the other, we have modern commercialised entertainment for the masses, allowing people not just to spend their free time in an appealing way, but also to get involved in worldwide modern transformation – this is the "low," vernacular variety of modernism. This dichotomy sheds light on the complexity of modernity – a global phenomenon – but in its local Łódź dimension retaining a separateness and its own peculiarities, which allows us to examine the changes going on in the world at the time on different levels and within different frames of reference.

The polyphonic story of modern Łódź which we are offering readers in this book is a chance for a closer look at the roots of European modernity in its various guises. It is of course a story of a world that is no more, although not entirely. We believe that it opens room for reflection on our current condition.

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Łódź – An Industrial City, a Modern City?

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One could be forgiven for thinking that the phenomena of "Łódź" and "modernity" are inextricably linked with other. It was, after all, the "Polish Manchester," an industrial city which, similarly to its English precursor, over the course of several dozen years evolved from a fallen agricultural town into the centre of an agglomeration comprising several hundred thousand inhabitants.[1] Located in the agrarian landscape of contemporary central Poland, Łódź concentrated within itself all that was best and, at once all that was worst in the dynamic industrialization and urbanization of the industrial era. Being in the vanguard of modernization, it was also its victim, and the various social problems typical of the modern world afflicted it with great intensity. At the same time, it impressed with the pace at which far-reaching economic and social change occurred – sometimes very much ahead of its time.[2] Thus, the question that needs to be posed is not so much whether Łódź was a modern city, but what the modernity of Łódź was like. The answer to this question should be sought in a broader context, by comparing the city to its direct counterparts in Western Europe and highlighting the specific features of its development.[3] My intention will be both to show the paradoxes associated with distinct manifestations of modernity in an industrial city, and to indicate the impact that the experience of modernity in Łódź had on people who came into contact with the textile metropolis. In recent years, we have been faced with a certain redefinition of accepted ideas about modernity. More and more often, researchers focus their interests not on the global centres, such as Paris or New York, but on non-obvious locations. They seek answers to the questions of how modernity was experienced in practice, and how that which was modern competed with what was established in conservative society. Provin-

1 J. Wolff, "Manchester, capital of the nineteenth century," *Journal of Classical Sociology*, 2013, vol. 13, no. 1, pp. 69–86.

2 A. Zysiak, K. Śmiechowski, K. Piskała, W. Marzec, K. Kaźmierska, J. Burski, *From Cotton and Smoke:* Łódź *– Industrial City and Discourses of Asynchronous Modernity 1897–1994*, Wydawnictwo UJ, Łódź–Kraków, 2018; A. Zysiak, "The desire for fullness. The fantasmatic logic of modernization discourses at the turn of the 19th and 20th century in Łódź," *Praktyka Teoretyczna*, 2014, vol. 13, no. 3, pp. 41–69; A. Kossert, "'Promised Land?' Urban Myth and the Shaping of Modernity in Industrial Cities: Manchester and Lodz," in *Imagining the City*, eds C. Emden, C. Keen, D. Midgley, Peter Lang GmbH, Bern, 2006, vol. 2: The Politics of Urban Space, pp. 169–191.

3 S. Liszewski, "The Origins and Stages of Development of Industrial Łódź and Łódź Urban Region," in *A comparative study of Łódź and Manchester: geographies of European cities in transition*, eds S. Liszewski, C. Young, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź, 1997, pp. 11–34.

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cial cities, somewhat overshadowed by the capitals and traditional urban centres, seem to be a most worthwhile subject of study. Further, they constitute an analytical category in themselves, one that encourages comparative research.[4]

As the philosopher Ryszard Nycz argues, we can distinguish at least three interpretations of the concept of modernity. Accordingly, it can be used to describe a "broad civilizational and cultural formation" from the times of the French Revolution to the trauma of the Shoah, it can refer to "the severe ordeals to which man was subjected following his exposure to the rationalist project of modernization, including the negative consequences of said project (which resulted in his objectification, incapacitation, disintegration and alienation)," and it can also allude to the modern experience as such.[5] Thus, the experience of modernity evoked a constant swing of moods, ranging from the loss of a sense of order to the prospect of its re-establishment.[6] It should be kept in mind that modernity is by its nature always defined in opposition to existing traditions and customs, as well as social and economic structures. In this context, the case of the factory giants from the times of *The Promised Land* is very interesting. When Andrzej Wajda adapted Reymont's novel for the screen, many of the critics who enthused about his latest project also emphasized the authenticity of the film set. They simply could not believe that the industrial plants established in the times of Scheibler and Poznański were still operating in the 1970s.[7] Once the symbols of modernity, after a few decades they were relics of the past, continuing in existence only because of the Communist system that had been imposed on Eastern Europe. In a sense, they functioned against the logic of history, which brought about the de-industrialization of the Western economies and the liquidation of the concomitant social structures. At the time, hardly anyone thought that the turn of the century would be a period of enrapturement with the industrial architecture of the city, and that the revitalization of historic tenement houses would supplant the modernist visions of a city with wide arteries and glass towers.[8] Łódź experienced a fate similar to its Secessionist tenements and brick factories, proceeding from being an object of negation to one of fascination.

4 J. Jenkins, *Provincial modernity: Local culture & liberal politics in fin-de-siècle Hamburg* , Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 2003; J. Gebhard, *Lublin eine polnische Stadt im Hinterhof der Moderne (1815–1914)*, Böhlau Verlag, Köln, 2006; N. D. Wood, *Becoming metropolitan: Urban selfhood and the making of modern Kraków,* Northern Illinois University Press, DeKalb, 2010.

5 R. Nycz, "O nowoczesności jako doświadczeniu," *Teksty Drugie*, 2006, no. 3, pp. 4–9.

6 Z. Bauman, *Modernity and Ambivalence*, John Wiley & Sons, 2013; M. Berman, *"Wszystko, co stałe, rozpływa się* w *powietrzu". Rzecz o doświadczeniu nowoczesności*, TAiWPN Universitas, Kraków, 2006, Horyzonty Nowoczesności 51.

7 A. Gronczewska, "Andrzej Wajda i Łódź, czyli historia niezwykle trudnej miłości…," *Dziennik Łódzki*, 19.10.2016, https://dzienniklodzki.pl/andrzej-wajda-i-lodz-czyli-historia-niezwykle-trudnej-milosci/ar/10760048.

8 K. Śmiechowski, *Historyczne dziedzictwo a tożsamość współczesnej Łodzi. Wyzwania w procesie regeneracji miasta*, in *Przeszłość, przyszłość i teraźniejszość Łodzi. Zbiór studiów z okazji 200 lat Łodzi przemysłowej*, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź, to be published, vol. 1: Historia i tożsamość miasta przemysłowego.

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What formula could be used to assess the modernity of Łódź? How are we to reconcile the desire to formulate spectacular assessments with a dispassionate analysis based on credible sources? The difficulty in answering the question whether Łódź was a modern city in the 19th and 20th centuries seems to be due largely to the fact that the point of reference through which we would like to localize the experience of this extraordinary city remains fluid. Seen from a purely technological angle, the story of its modernity will look different than when viewed from a socio-economic perspective, or if we were to take into account only the established set of ideas about the city and its residents.

Let us first consider the role of this textile city in the economic and social development of the Polish lands. Łódź was a unique project in the field of economic policy, a product of the protectionist policies followed by the government of the Congress Kingdom of Poland post–1815. Included among the so-called factory settlements that were being erected on the western frontiers of this tiny state, it could count on huge support from the authorities, which not only helped build the city from scratch, but also pursued an active immigration policy. It is worth noting that the main architect of the development of Łódź, Rajmund Rembieliński, the Voivode of Masovia, wrote an essay shortly after the fall of Napoleon, in which he argued that cities are the embodiment of progress and centres of future, modern civilization.[9] The transformation of Łódź and other townships into large "special economic zones" was therefore a strategic concept that was highly modernizational in nature, but at the same time relatively moderate in that it did not interfere with existing social structures.

For decades, the enormous role of the government and its officials in the city's initial development was considered proof that only the state was able to successfully implement projects of modernization in Eastern Europe. This logic, however, was blind to the other factors that determined its growth in the 19th century.[10] These included the initially strong support for activities of modernization among the local elites and the positive response to these actions on the part of German labourers and technicians, who possessed considerable textile know-how – of which there was a shortage in Congress Poland – and decided to resettle. The final element of the puzzle concerned harnessing of the economy of the industrial town into the logic of capitalism, which was achieved primarily thanks to the Jewish population, who organized the outwork system and thus oriented Łódź towards capitalism. Thus, by the beginning of the 19th century, a multinational organism had been created; as events showed, it was predestined to play a key role in the economic history of the Polish lands.[11]

9 Rembieliński R., "O miastach," *Pamiętnik Warszawski* 1816, vol. 4.

10 K. Kowalski, R. Matera, M. Sokołowicz, "Cotton Matters: A Recognition and Comparison of the Cottonopolises in Central-Eastern Europe during the Industrial Revolution," *Fibres & Textiles in Eastern Europe*, 2018, no. 132, pp. 16–23; R. Matera, K. Kowalski, J. Dzionek-Kozłowska, "Geography Matters. Environmental Factors That Affected The 'Take-Off' of Łódź," *Roczniki Dziejów Społecznych i Gospodarczych*, 2017, vol. LXXVIII, pp. 223–248.

11 M. Koter et al., *Wpływ wielonarodowego dziedzictwa kulturowego Łodzi na współczesne oblicze miasta*, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź, 2005.

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It is worth keeping in mind that although Łódź – by its very nature, as it were – was a centre of social progress, the actual implementation of progress was not without problems and tensions. When we look at descriptions of Łódź from the second half of the 19th century, we are struck by the strong ambivalence with which the town was perceived by both casual correspondents and professional reporters. Tomasz Kizwalter, who described the ideological dilemmas that accompanied the early phase of modernization of the Kingdom of Poland in his excellent *Nowatorstwo i rutyny*,[12] has quoted a salient opinion given by a journalist from Kalisz, who stated that, at first sight, Łódź betrayed a non-Polish character, while the appearance of the city, so clearly different from the typical Polish town with a market square, town hall, inn and church, purportedly aroused "a strange repugnance." Furthermore, Oskar Flatt, who was fascinated by Łódź and in 1853 authored the first book devoted to the city, emphasized its "foreign" character, having in mind both the ethnic and cultural dimension of this "otherness." Flatt wrote: "Its very type – how different it is from our other cities! At first sight, Łódź bears a distinct impress, which, on the one hand, has been left by the vast majority of the German population, and, on the other, by the influence of factory life; one can believe that one has found himself in the very midst of a German factory settlement, for here the people, the clubs and the spirit are purely German."[13] Flatt would have liked the Poles to follow the path marked out by the residents of Łódź, who were "as hard-working as ants," however he was in the minority. According to the dominant current of Polish public opinion, the industrial juggernaut – growing at a frenetic pace – was a monster sucking the vital forces out of the Polish countryside.[14]

This does not mean, however, that industrial Łódź was a terrible place, where workers met only with exploitation and suffering. This harsh view, popular both among right-wing journalists, who saw the city as a source of decadence, and Socialists, who dreamt of a brave new world, did not take into account the most fundamental question – that of alternatives. While taking note of all these flaws, we should nevertheless come to the defence of this industrial city. As I have emphasized, modernity has always been associated with a certain price that had to be paid in order to adapt to a rapidly changing world. This price, as is usually the case with great historical processes, has oftentimes been high. However, the indignant critics of modernity were heavily outnumbered by those who were willing to taste the unknown. One of the most famous natives of Łódź, Artur Rubinstein (1887–1982), described this most aptly: "The native Polish population did not show much interest in these enormous opportunities. It was not attracted to the world of business, and its favourite occupations were still farming, study and art. Only thousands of peasants were looking for work in the factories."[15]

12 T. Kizwalter, *"Nowatorstwo i rutyny". Społeczeństwo Królestwa Polskiego wobec procesów modernizacji (1840–1863)*, Państwowe Wydawnictwo Naukowe, Warszawa, 1991.

13 O. Flatt, *Opis miasta Łodzi pod względem historycznym, statystycznym i przemysłowym*, print shop of *Gazeta Codzienna*, Warszawa, 1853.

14 See K. Śmiechowski, *Z perspektywy stolicy. Łódź okiem warszawskich tygodników społeczno-kulturalnych (1881–1905)*, Wydawnictwo Ibidem, Łódź, 2012.

15 A. Rubinstein, *My Young Years*, Alfred A. Knopf, New York, 1973, p. 8.

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In fact, every year many more young people from the provinces came to Łódź voluntarily than could find work there. For a significant group of these newcomers, the journey to Łódź was an irreversible act, a sort of rite of passage after which nothing was ever the same again.[16] Obviously, while acclimatizing to the urban lifestyle, these rural workers were faced with many challenges. The cobblestoned city gave no security – although it did offer work, and thus emancipation from the post-feudal and patriarchal world symbolized by the well-known village of Lipce, in which Reymont set the plot of his novel *The Peasants*. However, the city was also full of dangers. A man aspiring to be accepted into the proletariat always had to "pay for his footing" – usually not having any savings, he would be forced to spend the first money he earned on gaining recognition among the factory hierarchy. Alcoholism was a problem commonly faced by working-class families. In particular, it afflicted men, and, thus, due to their much higher earnings, seriously hindered the material existence of families. A characteristic feature of the textile industry, however, was the significant percentage of working women, comprising both those who very young and independent, and mothers with considerable life experience, who returned to paid work for economic reasons.[17] Public opinion was against women working in factories as such, viewing it as the cause of alleged demoralization.[18] Industrial employment was most dangerous for young women, who were sexually assaulted by foremen. It was no different in the case of female servants, who were exploited by their employers. In fact, it was women who constituted the most conservative and extremely religious section of Łódź society. Their emancipation proceeded rather slowly, although its direction remained unchanged. The very fact that they were employed in large numbers helped them gain financial independence from their husbands, and, in consequence, led to an unconscious re-evaluation within families, which became steadily less patriarchal.[19] However, in the opinion of contemporary commentators, who were absorbed by the moral panic, these positive phenomena remained almost unnoticed.

The bourgeois public was unable to cope with the problem of street children – a phenomenon characteristic of the big city. There was a more or less common belief that the progeny of parents who were preoccupied with their toil in the factories were somehow doomed to demoralization. Journalists wrote bluntly that they grew into "wild piglets," instead of becoming civilized inhabitants of the city.[20] In the absence of a properly developed network of care facilities and the unavailability of modern contraceptives, the issue of birth control – or, rather, the lack thereof – soon gained paramount importance.

16 A. Żarnowska, *Workers, Women and Social Change in Poland, 1870–1939*, Ashgate/Variorum, 2004.

17 M. Sikorska-Kowalska, "Armia nowoczesnych niewolnic. Robotnice w Łodzi przełomu XIX i XX wieku," in *Robotnicy Łodzi drugiej połowy XIX wieku. Nowe kierunki badawcze*, Marta Sikorska-Kowalska, Kamil Śmiechowski, Kenshi Fukumoto, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź, 2016, pp. 49–85.

18 A. Urbanik-Kopeć, *Anioł w domu, mrówka w fabryce*, Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa, 2018.

19 A. Żarnowska, "Working Family at the Kingdom of Poland at the End of the 19th Century," *Polish Population Review*, 1997, vol. 10: Household and Family on the Polish Territories in Historical Perspective, pp. 50–75.

20 "Robotnicy łódzcy," *Goniec Łódzki* 1898, no. 40.

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As a result, a specific profession was created – that of the "procurer of angels."[21] This collective term was used to describe women who performed a range of services helping to control births. In addition to terminating pregnancies, they were also said to take unwanted children to "have them raised" – a process whereby, quite obviously, not many survived. It is difficult to assess the actual scale of this practice, but the Łódź press was full of stories about the discovery of yet another hotbed of evil in Bałuty or Chojny.[22]
Of course, the underdeveloped network of elementary schools was a major problem. It was said that the city was shockingly indifferent to the fate of its own children. According to calculations made by Adolf Suligowski, in 1897 the local authorities spent eight kopecks a year on education and charity. For comparison, Warsaw allocated forty-eight kopecks annually for this purpose, while Moscow spent two roubles and seventy kopecks.[23] Under such conditions, the opportunities for social advancement of working-class children were obviously limited. Growing up, they – like their parents – ended up in the factories. Child labour was one of the banes that the Factory Inspection, an institution that worked with great dedication to eliminate the pathologies of the world of large industrial plants, strove to combat. The names of those who tried to alleviate the difficult fate of both female and male factory employees and described the workers' plight in their writings – such as the Russian Vladimir Svyatlovsky, who was an inspector towards the end of the 19th century, and the Polish-Jewish poet Maria Przedborska, who was active in the interwar period – have gone down in history.[24]
Yet again, we are faced with the question whether the price paid by the female textile labourers and others who were looking for happiness in the industrial city was commensurate with the benefits they gained through hard labour in an industry was by no means light. However, it would be difficult to underestimate the emancipatory dimension of employment in the large factories. Particularly as it was often accompanied by the raising of civic awareness and the acquisition of human dignity. "I am not able and am not even trying to describe the mood that set in after this very short and very simple proclamation announcing the strike was read out, however I am convinced and maintain that this moment was of great, perhaps even of decisive importance for us bakers to start feeling human." This is how one of the workers recalled the effect that a proclamation of one of the revolutionary parties had on printers.[25] But the raising of awareness was not solely controlled by political parties, and the forms that it assumed did not always follow from what agitators suggested to the workers. A good example is the extremely bloody street fighting that erupted in Łódź in June 1905. The uprising, which broke out in the

21 M. Kurkowska, "'Fabrykantki aniołków'. O problemie aborcji w Polsce w latach 1878–1939," *Arcana*, 1998, no. 1, pp. 157–166.
22 W. Kirchner, *Walka z nędzą na Bałutach przedmieściu Łodzi*, Rozwój, Łódź, 1901.
23 A. Suligowski, "System dotychczasowego gospodarstwa miejskiego w Królestwie Polskim i jego wyniki," in *Pisma Adolfa Suligowskiego*, under the author's own imprint, Warszawa, 1915, vol. 1: Potrzeba samorządu, p. 39.
24 M. Madejska, "Maria Przedborska. Poetka z inspekcji pracy," *Herito*, 2019, no. 34.
25 W. Marzec, *Rebelia i reakcja. Rewolucja 1905 roku i plebejskie doświadczenie polityczne*, Wydawnictwo UŁ–Universitas, Łódź–Kraków, 2016, p. 155.

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city's streets following the bestial massacre (and purported secret burial) of workers who were attending a demonstration in honour of colleagues murdered by the Cossacks, attained a scale that party officials could not have foreseen. Moreover, the blood jointly spilt by the female and male labourers of Łódź – Poles and Germans, Christians and Jews – was the founding myth of "Red Lodz," a city with a developed class and political consciousness.[26] It made itself felt both during the Second Polish Republic, when the Sanation regime did not allow the formation of successive left-wing municipal councils, and after the Second World War, when the workers of Łódź fought against the system of shock workers and other forms of Stalinist enslavement.[27] Feminized and poor, "Red Łódź" finally rose up against the terrible working conditions in February 1971, forcing the Communist authorities to withdraw hikes in food prices, viewed as exceptionally severe by the textile workers who were forced to combine employment with caring for their children and keeping house.[28] The political involvement of women workers almost always had a social – not an ideological – dimension. While other centres of heavy industry were looking for a concept that would justify fighting against the authorities, the labourers of Łódź were looking primarily for conditions in which to improve their own lives and those of their children.[29]

Perhaps this is why Łódź, which was the main scene of the first urban revolution in this part of Europe, struggled to find its place in the irredentist visions of Polish history. Its historical experience was – next to that of Upper Silesia and Kashubia – to an extent an oddity, which in many ways did not fit into the national vision. What is more, neither post-1918 nor post-1989 did political freedom and full independence translate into better times for the city's residents in a purely economic sense. In the interwar period, the textile Molochs went bankrupt en masse following the loss of their markets and successive economic crises, and after the political transformation of 1989 they fell victim to the shock doctrine, that is, the radical transition from inefficient state Socialism to neoliberal capitalism. In both instances, the situation that evolved was paradoxical in the extreme: the workers who launched the revolutions in 1905 and then in 1980 turned out to be their biggest losers.

But the city aroused widespread dissatisfaction not only because of the difficult plight of its inhabitants. It drew sharp criticism also because of its predatory capitalist nature, cosmopolitan character, and the seemingly social anomie that resulted. The symbol of the latter was to be the *Lodzermensch*, a new type of man, obviously of German or Jewish origin, who made his appearance in the "Polish Manchester" and aroused fear mixed with genuine fascination. Who exactly was the *Lodzermensch*? It is difficult to find a

26 K. Śmiechowski, *Historyczne dziedzictwo a tożsamość współczesnej Łodzi. Wyzwania w procesie regeneracji miasta*, op. cit.

27 P. Kenney, *Rebuilding Poland: Workers and Communists, 1945–1950*, Cornell Univ. Press, Ithaca, London, 1997.

28 K. Lesiakowski, *Strajki robotnicze w Łodzi 1945–1976*, Instytut Pamięci Narodowej, Łódź, 2008.

29 M. Mazurek, "From Welfare State to Self-Welfare: Everyday Opposition among Female Textile Workers in Łódź, 1971–1981," in *Gender Politics and Mass Dictatorship Global Perspectives*, eds J.-H. Lim, K. Petrone, Palgrave Macmillan, London, 2010, pp. 278–300.

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uniform definition, because this journalistic category could easily include one of the members of the industrial bourgeoisie of Łódź, who earned his millions through hard work combined with good connections and had a unique seventh sense for business, as well as being a good-natured local patriot, such as Reymont's Halpern, who was fascinated by the city and felt proud at the tempo of its development.

Incidentally, in Wajda's film adaptation of *The Promised Land*, this character was very suggestively played with great intensity by Włodzimierz Boruński, a native of Łódź and a cousin of Julian Tuwim. Was he really only playing? It should be added that the *Lodzermensch* was viewed as a universal type of "man from Manchester." As Rosemary Wakeman notes, descriptions of 19th-century Manchester and Łódź were almost identical.[30] Unquestionably, the arch-*Lodzermensch* was Borowiecki, the anti-hero of Reymont's novel, who symbolized that which was considered unachievable – a Polish capitalist skilfully competing with "foreigners" in both financial and personal affairs. Borowiecki's ruthless character attracted the ideologues of both the Polish left, who saw in him the personification of the worst traits of the capitalist bloodsucker, and the right, according to whom he was the model of the modern Pole.[31]
In fact, the Poles who lived in Łódź in the times of *The Promised Land* joined the ranks of the intelligentsia, not of the financial and industrial elite. It was exactly through social activity that they, together with their German and Jewish colleagues, were able to exert a real influence on the city by satisfying its most pressing needs.[32] And the needs were countless. The Russians, who as a matter of form became recognized as one of the cultures that built industrial Łódź, created the framework thanks to which the city could quickly develop into an industrial powerhouse after the January Uprising, however they did not play a major role in its inner life. Despite attempts to convince the tsarist apparatus of oppression, which governed the "Vistula Land" with an iron fist, to create a Łódź Governorate, Russian officials preferred staid Piotrków to cosmopolitan Łódź. The city was managed by a Pole, Władysław Pieńkowski, who, however, due to his disciplinarianism and servility, accompanied by the systemic limitations imposed on his office, was more of an administrator than a programmer of the city's development.[33] As a consequence, as Stanisław Koszutski wrote, Łódź before the First World War was

30 R. Wakeman, *A Modern History of European Cities: 1815 to the Present*, Bloomsbury Academic, London and New York, 2020, p. 46. See also A. Kossert, "'Promised Land?' Urban Myth and the Shaping of Modernity in Industrial Cities: Manchester and Lodz," op. cit.

31 K. Śmiechowski, "Endeckie postrzeganie miasta. Ewolucja tematyki miejskiej na *łamach* 'Przeglądu Wszechpolskiego' i 'Przeglądu Narodowego'," *Studia Podlaskie*, 2018, vol. 26, pp. 7–26.

32 M. Iwańska, *W poszukiwaniu inteligenckiej tożsamości w XIX wieku. Przykład* łódzki, in *Historia – mentalność – tożsamość. Studia z historii, historii historiografii i metodologii historii*, Instytut Historii UAM, Poznań, 2010, pp. 261–273; M. Iwańska, "Inteligencja i rewolucja w Łodzi w latach 1905–1907," *Studia z Historii Społeczno-Gospodarczej XIX i XX wieku*, 2015, vol. XV, pp. 65–98.

33 K. Śmiechowski, *Kwestie miejskie. Dyskusja o problemach i przyszłości miast w Królestwie Polskim 1905–1915*, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź, 2020, pp. 130–132.

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"like an orphan, without a mother and father," where "so many unsatisfied needs" went hand in hand with "such great indifference on the part of the municipal authorities."[34] The police-based and essentially laissez-faire style of management applied in the kingdom led to the development in Łódź of an extremely original network of mutual connections between individual social actors.[35] Since the authorities failed to carry out public investments, the only effective way of mitigating the city's embarrassing shortcomings in the field of education and healthcare were the joint efforts of the multinational and multi-denominational community, which had primarily philanthropic tools at its disposal. Nongovernmental institutions, such as the Łódź Christian Charity Society, Kropla Mleka (which literally means "drop of milk"), ambulance service, fire brigade, etc., made it possible for the city to function.[36] Numerous private foundations were responsible for the development of vocational schools and theatres, and even for the establishment of denominational hospitals and nursing homes. However, this huge effort could not entirely compensate for the failures of the public authorities, who were by no means eager to erect school buildings – desperately required by the rapidly growing city – or undertake costly investments, such as a water and sewage system. As a result, Łódź at the turn of the 20th century deserved no more than a very ambivalent appraisal. Rubinstein recalled: "Łódź used to be the most unhealthy and unhygienic city that you could imagine: there were no parks and no squares, and no places where children could play. The air was polluted by fumes from chemical factories, while the thick, black smoke rising from the chimneys obscured the sky. (…) At night, it was even worse. (…) But Noemi and I looked at all these shortcomings with a completely different eye: we loved Łódź!"[37] This ambivalence is also clearly visible in the discourse on the city which filled the columns of local newspapers and magazines. This discourse was nothing more than a conversation about the city, its good and bad sides, its advantages and disadvantages, and, finally, about its charm or ugliness; let us keep in mind that a great city by its very existence provokes a reflection and a constant exchange of views about itself. It is no coincidence that the Łódź of that era, full of contrasts and paradoxes, exploitation and wealth, hatred and cooperation – a Łódź that no longer exists and which, in truth, only a few would want to return to – was described by Artur Glisczyński, a local "singer," poet, and journalist:

> If we talk about a woman who is devoid of beauty and without features, but is at once intelligent, and has that something that makes her worth approaching and getting to know, then Łódź is seemingly the ugliest woman, has a freckled face,

34 S. Koszutski, *Nasze miasta a samorząd (życie miast w Królestwie Polskim i reforma samorządowa)*, E. Wende i Spółka, Warszawa–Lwów, 1915, pp. 35–36.

35 Y. S. Kanfer, *Lodz: Industry, Religion, and Nationalism in Russian Poland, 1880–1914*, PhD dissertation, Yale University, 2011, pp. 137–208; M. Koter et al., *Wpływ wielonarodowego dziedzictwa kulturowego Łodzi na współczesne oblicze miasta*…, op. cit.

36 J. Sosnowska, *Działalność socjalna i opiekuńczo-wychowawcza* Łódzkiego *Chrześcijańskiego Towarzystwa Dobroczynności*, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź, 2011.

37 A. Rubinstein, *My Young Years*…, op. cit., p. 8.

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> is a cosmopolitan by conviction, is a wealthy and ugly maid, and at the same time intelligent. You cannot, you should not, harass her – this would be inappropriate – and yet it is difficult to love and get used to her physiognomy. (…) You have to overcome your disgust towards this city, to tell yourself that getting to know it is not a pleasure, but a duty, for you are becoming acquainted with a force, perhaps hostile and dangerous, but immense.[38]

The prevailing discourse in the Łódź press was how terrible urban life here had become; there was hope for rapid improvement, which, the press insisted, could be achieved through a mobilized effort on the part of the community. As one journalist observed: "In terms of the culture of its inhabitants, our Łódź, despite the appearances of a great city, is still a rather large township. (…) Strange contrasts: the highest possible development of industrial technology, which is in the forefront of civilizational achievements – and at the same time a parochialism of concepts, views and forms of life!"[39] In fact, this diagnosis led not so much to expectations as to demands for imminent improvement: "It is high time that Łódź stopped being considered a small provincial town – and not even a district town! – that will be satisfied with simple patriarchal devices,"[40] appealed the right-wing *Rozwój*.

The city's newspapers were full of articles seeking fresh impulses and would-be initiators of its modernization. Strenuous efforts were made to stimulate local patriotism and a sense of civic duty. "I hate Łódź! Such an exclamation can often be heard from the lips of people belonging to the intelligentsia, and it undoubtedly also breaks out from the depths of the breast of many a poor man,"[41] it was lamented, with calls for even more intensive efforts to improve the city's dire situation. Of course, this "love-hate relationship" was an immanent part of the modern experience, and Łódź presented itself as one of its most ambiguous creations mainly because of the scale of the contrasts which it generated. Modern solutions and devices were introduced to the city's illiterate, who had no chance of receiving any education, while the elegant residences of factory owners neighboured on pools of toxic sewage. Łódź was home to a constant epidemic of infectious diseases, and local doctors-cum-social workers of various nationalities (Karol Jonscher, of German descent; Aleksander Margolis and Seweryn Sterling, who were Jewish; and Tadeusz Mogilnicki, Włodzimierz Szenajch, and Stanisław Skalski, who were Polish) became unquestioned authorities on the treatment of cholera and tuberculosis. Some of their accounts are terrifying. In 1899, in a report on the activities of the hospital at the Scheibler plant, one of the physicians wrote:

> "In the women's room, there are seven consumptives, one next to the other; the course of their sicknesses is severe.

38 A. Glisczyński, A. Mieszkowski, *Łódź – miasto i ludzie* (1894), in *Łódź, która przeminęła w publicystyce i prozie (antologia)*, Łódź, 2008, p. 9.
39 "Nadczułość prowincjonalna," *Goniec Łódzki* 1899, no. 15.
40 "Kronika tygodniowa," *Rozwój* 1899, no. 108.
41 "Partykularyzm łódzki," *Rozwój* 1911, no. 292.

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> One of them has a huge pleural exudate, while another has tuberculosis of the bladder in addition to pulmonary tuberculosis. Right next to them, in a separate room, there lie two sick women: one paralysed because of tuberculosis, and literally by her side (…) – dying. On the first floor, among the men, in a separate room, intended solely for consumptives, six beds are occupied. (…) What a feeling a doctor must experience upon entering a room with so many tuberculosis patients whom he can so rarely help!"[42]

These feelings, however depressing, did lead to Promethean attitudes. The main problem that a researcher of Łódź must face is that this "city of proletarians," as the Russian journalist Ivan Timkovsky-Kostin[43] called it, was touched upon mainly by educated people who made a living from writing – in other words, by representatives of the intelligentsia. Obviously, the intelligentsia, although difficult to define as a social class, undeniably constituted the elite in the countries of Eastern European, which did not have strong bourgeois traditions.[44] However, the intelligentsia was invariably a special stratum, always convinced of its own uniqueness and social mission, on whose fulfilment rested the fate of the country. For successive generations, the weak and the excluded were the focus of this mission. It was no different in Łódź. Not in every instance do we have sources that show an obvious connection between the experience of urban living and later life choices of its residents, but there are cases of people for whom the formative dimension of the experience, that is, growing up in an industrial city, was indisputable. They are most obvious for those who decided to join the ranks of the labour movement. Their origins, however, were highly distinct – from the salons of the factory owners, as in the case of Maria Kamińska (1897–1983), to the poor, working-class abodes that were home to Aleksy Rżewski (1885–1939), the future mayor of the city.

Kamińska's path is especially worthy of attention. Coming from the wealthy Jewish Eiger family, she grew up in luxury, only to become a staunch Communist as an adult. Her intellectual outlook was shaped in opposition to both family tradition and her own social status and the cultural capital associated therewith. One of the factors that pushed the industrialist's daughter towards Socialism was the curiosity of another world, which she, being a young woman from a wealthy home, was completely unfamiliar with. In her diary, Eiger-Kamińska wrote:

> During the Easter holidays I am once again in Łódź. I am staying in the palace of Maurycy Poznański. On Ogrodowa Street, I pass by the family homes that Poznański's company erected for its workers. These are hideous, red brick barracks. But in all the windows I see curtains and pots with flowers. I am amazed.

42 H. Olszewski, "Sprawozdanie z działalności szpitala fabryk Tow. Akc. Karola Scheiblera w Łodzi," *Czasopismo Lekarskie* 1899, no. 3, p. 119.

43 I. Timkovsky-Kostin, *Miasto proletariuszów (Łódź)*, S. Zutto, Łódź, 1907.

44 J. Jedlicki, "Problems with the intelligentsia," *Acta Poloniae Historica*, 2009, no. 100, pp. 15–30; D. Sdvizkov, *Das Zeitalter der Intelligenz: zur vergleichenden Geschichte der Gebildeten in Europa bis zum Ersten Weltkrieg*, Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, Göttingen, 2006.

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> I read and heard so much about the misery of the workers that I imagined that they live cooped up in some terrible hovels, sleeping on beds of straw and dressed in rags. I cannot believe that they have flowers in their homes.[45]

However, her surprise was not isolated. Even the local press admitted to being ignorant of how the proletariat lived. In 1898, a journalist noted: "For a long time, the inhabitants of Łódź from other strata paid almost no attention to this class, treating the representatives of the working class equally with machines."[46]

This quote casts a shadow on the relations that existed between the various social strata residing in the "Polish Manchester." Maria Kamińska recalled that after the murder of her uncle, Mieczysław Silberstein, during the Revolution of 1905, she "felt somehow guilty for the fact that the workers were threatened with hanging and exile." As a consequence, she took upon herself "the blame for the poverty, injustice and lawlessness." She added, "This feeling accompanied me in my life for many, many years."[47] At the same time, Kamińska, although undoubtedly blinded by Marxist ideology, could not help but notice that on a purely human level the industrialists, in spite of the despicable aspects of their activities, such as seeking the Russians to suppress strikes or organizing a lockout in late 1907,[48] were not always the ruthless bloodsuckers that they were stereotypically portrayed as. "From family accounts," she wrote, "I knew that when Łódź was in the throes of the terrible cholera epidemic, my grandfather and grandmother donated considerable sums to help save the city. Further, they personally funded the orphanage for children whose parents had died of cholera."[49] Elsewhere, she declared that "in their normal lives, these people were neither bad nor stupid. Uncle Maurycy was very fond of children; he often played with us and fulfilled all his daughters' whims with undisguised pleasure. He was very tender and affectionate towards his wife. He read a great deal and was interested in politics. It was that of the factory owners, he had a good head on his shoulders."[50] How strange it is that such a reminiscence came from the pen of a fanatical Communist.

Aleksy Rżewski, one of the most important persons in the political life of interwar Łódź, chose an altogether different political path. While Kamińska devoted herself to the struggle against capital, Rżewski, an armed fighter of the Polish Socialist Party during the Revolution of 1905, took advantage of Poland's newly regained of independence to pursue a normal political career. Perhaps this was because, as a man from the lower classes of society, he did not feel the shame that was to determine the future life of Silberstein's granddaughter. It was clear to Rżewski that the struggle for a better future for the working-class city had to go hand in hand with the fight for freedom. Hence,

45 M. Kamińska, *Ścieżkami wspomnień*, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa, 1960, p. 47.
46 *Goniec Łódzki* 1898, no. 40
47 M. Kamińska, *Ścieżkami wspomnień*…, op. cit., p. 33.
48 A. R. Hofmann, "The Biedermanns in the 1905 Revolution: A Case Study in Entrepreneurs' Responses to Social Turmoil in Łódź," *The Slavonic and East European Review*, 2004, vol. 82, no. 1, pp. 27–49.
49 M. Kamińska, *Ścieżkami wspomnień*…, op. cit., p. 23.
50 Ibidem, p. 30.

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in 1919, the consistently pro-independence stance of this eminent activist was elected mayor of Łódź on behalf of the first City Council, which was dominated by the Socialists. Imbued with lofty ideals, Rżewski probably did not fully realize how difficult a task he had taken upon his shoulders. As he wrote, "I became mayor of the city of Łódź, which, in 1919 – devastated by the Muscovites, robbed by the Prussians and ruined by the war – presented a picture of misery and despair. It was the rule of self-government on ruins…"[51] Nevertheless, the democratically elected mayor set to work with gusto. As an active participant of the Revolution of 1905, he was aware that, in Łódź, subsequent apogees of social unrest were moments when discussions about the vision and shape of the city intensified. They provoked not only self-reflection, but also efforts to accomplish things that would serve the general public. Like buckets of cold water, successive failures and the meanders of history sobered the Łódź elites, forcing them to abandon their comfort zone and tone down their megalomania, and pointing to that which had to be done "immediately," and then followed up. He doubtless perfectly well remembered the appeal to the intelligentsia that had been published in the city's press towards the end of 1905. In it, a group of Germans, Poles, and Jews – lawyers, teachers, and doctors – wrote: "The terrifying power of the illiterate among the masses of the people (…) thrusts upon the shoulders of the present generation of our intelligentsia a great and sacred duty – to bridge this huge gap as rapidly as possible."[52] Had it not been for the proclamation, Łódź probably would not have been the first city in reborn Poland to introduce compulsory and universal education. Within a few years, the greatest nightmare of Łódź – illiteracy – had been eliminated; this was accompanied by the erection of large school buildings, the commencement of work on a sewage system, and the construction of modern hospitals. The authorities pursued a policy of municipal Socialism, which opposed the increasingly nationalistic capitalist discourse.[53]

Bearing in mind the words of Rubinstein, let us now trace the fates of two brothers-in-law, who, having grown up in Łódź, set out to conquer the world. Especially as they were excellent ambassadors of the city and its specific sensitivity. The interests of the first – the world-famous economist Michał Kalecki (1899–1970) – seem to be strongly intertwined with his youth, which he spent in the industrial city. Kalecki, an economic theorist who developed the theory of the business cycle in parallel with the great John Maynard Keynes, was the son of a small businessman from Łódź and the daughter of an official. He was an uncompromising critic of capitalism, the secrets of which he learned in his own family home. Among other things, he wrote that, more than profits, business leaders value "discipline in factories" and "political stability." Even at the expense of profits, they prefer an insecure and intimidated workforce to one that is "self-confident and vocal," while "thrift is just a codename for transferring wealth and power into the

51 A. Rżewski, *W walce z trójzaborcami o Polskę niepodległą. Wspomnienia*, Wydawnictwo Księgarni Łódzkiej "Czytaj," Łódź, 1931, p. 230.

52 "Odezwa do inteligencji naszego miasta," *Goniec Łódzki* 1905, no. 298-a.

53 K. Piskała, "The Interwar: Democratic Politics and Modern City Between Two Wars 1918–1923," in A. Zysiak et al., *From Cotton and Smoke…,* op. cit., pp. 101–159.

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hands of steadily fewer people."[54] How similar these statements are to those made by one of the directors of a local factory, who during the Revolution of 1905 supposedly told a reporter that "a worker's wage should cover his minimal costs of living," and that a factory employee should earn "just enough not to die. Otherwise, we shall be doing him a disservice."[55] The notion of "where there is exploitation, there is profit" must have been popular among the city's industrial circles, and such journalistic accounts should not be brushed away as insignificant anecdotes. It must be remembered, however, that the tsarist state failed greatly in its role as a regulator of relations in this sensitive field, as if asking for a revolution – and independent Poland was not all that much better.

Kalecki's brother-in-law was Ary Sternfeld (1905–1980), who in the interwar period, when Łódź was plunged into a great crisis, was involved in tracking the movements of stars and writing his life's work, *Wstęp do kosmonautyki*. Admittedly, it is difficult imagining someone observing the stars in the skies over Łódź and writing a serious scientific work in the city. And yet this perverse environment, full of contradictions and contrasts, could become home not only to predatory *Lodzermenschen* and revolutionaries dreaming of overthrowing the existing order, but also to the precursors of astronautics – and … poets.

If we were to look for a sphere that best illustrates the paradoxicality of the modernity of Łódź, it would undoubtedly be culture. The process of solidification of Łódź as a centre of culture was certainly full of fluctuations – just like modernity itself. Obviously, it must be emphasized that this multinational and multi-denominational city is often presented as one of four cultures, wherein a series of creative interactions allegedly occurred between the various groups. However, this view is based on weak foundations – it is one thing for a city to be inhabited by various cultures (in the period before 1939, Łódź was by no means unique in this respect), and another to be a location where these cultures were created.[56] Stefan Gorski, the author of an extremely valuable book which documents various manifestations of the city's life at the beginning of the 20th century, had the courage to write that "the first thing that strikes you in Łódź is the lack of culture."[57] And although this biting remark concerned the city's buildings, it was clear that it also applied to its residents. In the early years of the 20th century, Zygmunt Bartkiewicz, an artist who practised many arts, from painting to writing (and, importantly, was fulfilled in none), ran an "art salon," in fact a shop with assorted old junk which he claimed was a temple of art in a city accused of lacking culture. It goes without saying that the salon shared the fate of other ambitious cultural projects, which did not quite fit the profile of the local citizenry, often ended in failure. Entrepreneurs who wanted to offer the city

54 A. Chakrabrotty, "Brytyjczycy czytają Kaleckiego," transl. A. Ehrlich, *Gazeta Wyborcza*, 25.–26.05.2013.

55 Z. Bartkiewicz, *Złe miasto: obrazy z 1907 roku*, Gebethner i Wolff, Warszawa, 1911.

56 J. Michlic, "Lodz in the Post-communist Era: In Search of a New Identity," in *Post-communist Cities: New Cultural Reorientations and Identities*,, eds J. Czaplicka, N. Gelasis, B. Ruble, Johns Hopkins University Press, Washington DC, 2008, pp. 281–304; A. Kossert, "'Promised Land?' Urban Myth and the Shaping of Modernity in Industrial Cities: Manchester and Lodz," op. cit.

57 S. Gorski, *Łódź spółczesna. Obrazki i szkice publicystyczne*, Nakładem Rychlińskiego i Wegnera, Warszawa, 1904, p. 8.

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sophisticated forms of theatrical art fared the worst. While the German theatre in Łódź had a long tradition and its own loyal audience,[58] its Polish counterpart had neither. What finally helped was the establishment of the Theatre Society, which enabled its development through funds provided by German and Jewish industrialists, chief among them Maurycy Poznański (incidentally, Maria Kamińska's uncle). But before this happened, poor Michał Wołowski, an outstanding director and unfortunate administrator, paid for his stay in Łódź with bankruptcy and, presumably, a premature death. The working-class city was interested in different forms of culture than the intelligentsia cared to believe. What aroused the keen interest of residents was mass – not high – culture, for the latter required audiences to have specific cultural competences. Although mocked and treated patronizingly, dance parties, circus shows, and outdoor events, as well as the photoplasticon and cinema – both fascinating novelties of the era – gained immense popularity. They were a perfect product of modernity, even if their significance was misunderstood by the elites.[59]

The Łódź press, whose portrayals of the level of local culture were extremely critical, nevertheless came to the city's defence when the economist Stanisław Koszutski called it "a disgusting accumulation of warehouses and factory buildings," and "a city that does not satisfy even the minutest requirements of a decent, healthy and harmonious personal or public life." As one journalist fired back: "This image painted in colours so terribly black, is true only if it refers to cultural traditions, which the city, having been in existence for but a short while, most direly lacks." He added,

> However, we would like to believe that, as far as aspirations are concerned, we will find a great many of them. (…) The moment when the satisfaction of the minutest requirements of a decent, healthy and harmonious personal or public life shall become possible is not all that far off. Until now, Łódź has been developing and growing stronger, getting richer and beautifying itself; presently, it is becoming civilized, and there is no doubt that it will take the greatest possible steps on this path. Culture will soon become the need and ambition of its residents.[60]

It would appear that these words were not an exaggeration. Despite serious economic problems, growing ethnic conflicts, and strong political polarization, in the first half of the 20th century Łódź slowly transformed itself from a modern industrial centre into a modern urban centre, which, contrary to Koszutski's opinion and despite the lack of state universities, had a developed intellectual life. The sources at our disposal suggest that just before the Shoah – the greatest tragedy in history – processes were under way that would result in it actually becoming a great, fully-fledged cosmopolitan city. It is worth taking a look at the special edition of *Giewont* magazine that was published in

58 K. Prykowska-Michalak, *Teatr niemiecki w Łodzi. Sceny, wykonawcy, repertuar (1867–1939)*, Wydawnictwo UŁ, Łódź, 2005.

59 Ł. Biskupski, *Miasto atrakcji. Narodziny kultury masowej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Narodowe Centrum Kultury, Warszawa, 2013.

60 "Z dnia na dzień," *Goniec Łódzki* 1900, no. 78.

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1928, as it constitutes – as the editors grandly announced – a monograph on Łódź, written by the joint efforts of the local business, scholarly, and political elites. One of the authors, the industrialist Marceli Barciński, argued that "Łódź, devoid of age-old traditions dating back to the pre-partition era, has created its own tradition, which is called 'work'." In his opinion, "Here, therefore, work is the be-all and end-all of life, in regard of which there is no room for any ancillary considerations. (…) Łódź, completely aside from any external features, is also unto its essence and internal structure – like no other city in Poland, and perhaps even in the whole world – a city of work par excellence."[61] That which had previously formed the basis of a critique of the city, namely, its industrial character, slowly began to be viewed as a source of pride. Łódź was no longer ashamed of its identity, and even began to feel a certain satisfaction from its omnipresent cult of work, which, as we know, was in short supply at the time. Czesław Nussbaum-Ołtaszewski, the editor of *Republika*, which was popular in the interwar period, wrote bluntly and unashamedly: "We love Łódź," adding, "even though it is ugly, charged with smoke, and has no sewage system. (…) We complain and sometimes we swear – but it is heartfelt… And that is why we do not like, very much indeed, when someone swears and despises, and yet neither sees nor feels. Because Łódź – it is us."[62]

But who could have guessed that one of Europe's oldest collections of exclusive modern art – incomprehensible to the average person – would be established in this very city? The Łódź Museum of Art deserves attention precisely because of its rather random and humble start. It was founded on the initiative of Przecław Smolik (1877–1947), a man with a wide range of interests so typical of the intelligentsia here – a doctor, teacher, and writer – who became associated with Łódź in 1926, when he began to work for the city. Although the new institution was based on the rich collection of art that had been donated to the city by the Galician collector Kazimierz Bartoszewicz, it quickly became home to Władysław Strzemiński (1893–1952) and his wife, Katarzyna Kobro (1898–1951), both eminent avant-garde artists and theoreticians of art. Strzemiński, an intellectual from Minsk, in which Polish, Byelorussian, Russian, and Jewish influences converged, and Kobro, a Russian of German descent, were outstanding and at the same time difficult personalities, and their relationship was far from idyllic. However, they were connected by art, or, to put it more precisely, by their ultra-modernist views on the topic. They called the group which they formed around themselves "a.r.," which can be translated into English as "revolutionary artists." In the deserted palace building of the Poznański family (the same building that Kamińska visited as a child), they arranged the *Sala neoplastyczna* (the Neoplastic Hall) – the first space in Poland designed especially for the presentation of new art. By 1938, they had amassed a huge collection of modern art, which to this day underlines the city's importance on the map of European cultural institutions. At the same time, and befittingly for modernists, neither Kobro nor Strzemiński liked the city where they found their haven. They took up residence on the modernist Józef Montwiłł-Mirecki Housing Estate that had been erected on

61 M. Barciński, "Miasto pracy," *Giewont* 1928, no. 3, p. 136.

62 C. Ołtaszewski, "Miasto naszych tęsknot," *Giewont* 1928, no. 3, p. 143.

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the initiative of the Socialist municipal government; located next to a large park, it was somewhat untypical of the city's building development. It is amazing what Strzemiński wrote about Łódź as a professor at the Academy of Fine Arts: "For material reasons, it would be more rational to building a new Łódź rather than to incur double the costs by tearing it down and constructing a new city on the ruins of the old."[63] How is it possible that this radical modernist actually wanted to demolish Łódź, which was, after all, the most paradigmatic example of a modern city in Poland? Obviously, this question can be answered in several ways.

First of all, as I have emphasized, modernity as an ideological formation was always oriented towards the future, and developed in a sui generis opposition to all that which existed. Challenging the status quo was tantamount to taking issue with the fruits of the Industrial Revolution. Secondly, when viewed in objective terms, the chaotic development of Łódź left a lot to be desired, and thus constituted a grateful subject for the evolvement of various futuristic visions. Thirdly, the new Communist system that emerged after the Second World War intended to create a reality that would be better than the capitalist, multicultural world, and its determination to achieve this goal did not allow for self-reflection. And although Strzemiński's crazy ideas were never put into practice, if only for financial reasons, and, moreover, met with a reserved reception from urban planners, a peculiarly destructive way of thinking about the city persisted in the minds of post-war decision makers for a very long time. One of its most significant victims were the old preserved weavers' houses at Piotrkowska Street, which were demolished in the 1970s to make way for an ugly high-rise, perversely called the Łódź Manhattan. As if the point of reference always had to be external, alluding to English Manchester or distant New York.

Meanwhile, as it seems, the case of industrial Łódź says a lot about the Central European road to modernity and its asynchronicity, which manifested itself in the interpenetration of phenomena from different temporal orders.[64] It was not, as many still want to believe, a ready-made modernity that developed without any contact with the West.[65] On the contrary, regardless of their location on the map, all those who experienced modernity had to process it in their own unique way. Łódź was the scene of such a struggle, and its modernity was first and foremost an experience that altered the perception of the world of those who came into contact with the city, or happened to grow up there. Industrial Łódź appeared on the map of an agricultural, peripheral country as a brazen intruder brought on by the age of iron and steam. By its very existence, it exposed the extent to which the traditional, post-aristocratic vision of Polishness was unsuited to the challenges of the modern world. It aroused disgust, but also fascination. Terror and admiration. It symbolized the most perfect form of the modern economy – the industrial

63 W. Strzemiński, "Łódź sfunkcjonalizowana," *Kultura Współczesna* 1947, p. 457.

64 A. Zysiak et al., *From Cotton and Smoke…,* op. cit., pp. 257–263.

65 S. Bianchini, *Eastern Europe and the Challenges of Modernity, 1800–2000*, Routledge, London–New York, 2015.

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city – which stood accused by moralists of all persuasions.[66] Exploitation, environmental pollution, the depravation of women and children, the rupturing of man's ties with nature – the list of potential charges was long. It should be remembered that the "other Manchesters" scattered across Europe, similarly to their prototype, did not enjoy universal respect. Łódź, located on the periphery of the 19th-century world system, revealed all the advantages and disadvantages of capitalism with greater clarity than the centres of industry which evolved in the bourgeois environments of the West. At the same time, it was marked by the splendour of the factory owners' palaces, and made distinct as a multicultural melting pot built by immigrants and providing work to the local rural masses. Further, Łódź was the first city in the Kingdom of Poland to introduce electric trams and erect modern gasworks, and the first in the Polish lands to open cinemas; further still, it is home to one of the oldest museums of modern art in Europe. Łódź, however, also had an embarrassing illiteracy rate, which at the turn of the 20th century exceeded 50 % of the population; a regular epidemic of infectious diseases; and terrible living conditions; the "Polish Manchester," the "Polish Detroit," the "Bad City," and the "Promised Land" all rolled into one. Last but not least, Łódź finds its embodiment in its citizens, who, shaped in a multi-denominational and multinational environment, displayed a specific social sensitivity and a sense of mission to repair the imperfections of this world which they knew so well.

66 J. Jedlicki, "Proces przeciwko miastu," in Świat *zwyrodniały. Lęki i wyroki krytyków nowoczesności*, Sic!, Warszawa, 2000, pp. 83–113.

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The Poor City of Łódź

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Introduction

In the present text, I will discuss the problem of exclusion and poverty in the modernist period in Łódź, while extending the period itself to the year 1939. Furthermore, I will show how the issue was depicted in oral sources – the recollections of individual workers and their families who lived in the era – that were gathered in the course of field ethnographic studies. The B. Kopczyńska-Jaworska Ethnographic Archive of the Institute of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology of the University of Łódź is a veritable reservoir of such testimonies. Research into working-class culture reveal, among other things, the daily lives of families, changes in the cultural models of people migrating from rural areas to the city, the development of a new social stratum, and the phenomenon of masculinity in Łódź. Poverty or destitution did not constitute a separate subject, that is, one specially touched upon in the course of these studies (which flourished mainly in the 1960s and 70s, and to a lesser extent in subsequent decades); it appeared indirectly, for example, in recollections of personal experiences of economic crises, collapses of the labour market, of childhoods, unemployment, and other topics. In an important look devoted to working-class culture, the leading female authors of ethnographic research concerning Łódź[1] wrote openly – using the gathered materials as their basis – that "families of the long-term unemployed and those who were casually employed during the global crisis of 1929–1934 were excluded from the field of analysis, it being clearly assumed that their *culture of poverty* should be treated separately."[2]

The problem of poverty may, however, be classified as an element of the specific structure of the long duration of the myth of "Łódźness;" namely, it forms part of the image of Łódź as the "bad city,"[3] where – to use a simplification – the success of the *Lodzermenschen* was founded on the exploitation and penury of the city's male and female workers. The "long duration" of interest in the poverty of Łódź (or "Łódź-style" poverty) has a rich scholarly history that was developed by local researchers (first and foremost sociologists) in the 20th and 21st centuries.

1 The pre-eminent researcher was B. Kopczyńska-Jaworska.

2 G. E. Karpińska, B. Kopczyńska-Jaworska, A. Woźniak, "Pracować żeby żyć, żyć żeby pracować," Łódź: PWN – *Łódzkie Studia Etnograficzne* 1992, vol. 31, p. 6.

3 See Z. Bartkiewicz, *Złe miasto*, Łódź, 2001.

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The Modernity of Łódź

In its industrial past, Łódź was subordinated to work and manufacturing. It was a monocultural city – not only in an economic sense, but also because the lifestyle of its residents (although they originated from different ethnic, cultural, and national groups, each with its own separate language and system of beliefs) was adapted to the predominant activity of work in the factories, which operated mainly in the textile sector.

The modernist era was a time of fascination with the "city" and its new infrastructure, which was subject to a distinct logic, symbolism, aesthetic, and ethics: "We feel that we are no longer people of the cathedrals, palaces and salons, but rather those of the great hotels and railway stations, broad streets and immense gates, the roofed marketplaces, the illuminated tunnels, and the perfectly straight highways; *of the healing renewal of the cities*" [emphasis mine].[4]

The preoccupation with the "metropolis" expressed by the creators of the international futurist avant-garde at the beginning of the 20th century coincided with the period of Łódź's most intense development, which had commenced more or less in the final decades of the 19th century and lasted until the First World War. The futuristic and utopian vision of the "city," which identified modernity as a positive force, did not necessarily have a raison d'être in the case of Łódź, which was, to all intents and purposes, simply a destination for those escaping from the country and other locations ravished by poverty and a lack of prospects.[5] However, Łódź provided little, if any, improvement, as the reports, articles, and oral tradition depicting the lifestyle of the times clearly indicated; rather, the reality was poverty, crime, high mortality, disease, and malnutrition.

The avant-garde embrace of the "metropolis" marked the culmination of the cultural coup d'état that took place under the influence of the preceding industrial revolution. It gave hope for the realization of needs and desires on a greater scale. Tadeusz Peiper wrote the city was innovative by its nature, that is, that it induced one to sever ties with the inherited method of thinking. However, although the "city" was the quintessence of transformation, human habits and ways of reasoning changed at a slower pace. Thus, if we accept Peiper's reasoning, the "city" could have initially aroused aversion, especially as its physiological conditions differed from those known, which originated from the world of nature, where "man had access to fresh air and where his hands and feet were

4 This is a fragment of a futurist manifesto entitled "Architektura futurystyczna," which was written in 1914 by Antonio Sant'Elia, an Italian architect. The statement inspired another Italian futurist, Filippo Tomasso Marinetti, whose text is better known, although, despite certain departures, strongly based on the thinkings and postulates of Sant'Elia (from M. Geron, "Wizja miasta w twórczości Leona Chwistka," *Acta Universitatis Nicolai Copernici. Zabytkoznawstwo i Konserwatorstwo* 1990, vol. 39, pp. 59–84; the author has cited this fragment of Sant'Elia's writing from C. Baumgarth, *Futuryzm,* Warszawa, 1987).

5 I have not uncovered any data regarding the causal factors of migration in the era, however we may assume that they were not far removed from those that are determined today, with the "quest for a different and better lifestyle" being among the five most important (L. Wojnicz, "Przyczyny migracji Polaków w Unii Europejskiej po 1 maja 2004 roku," *Przeszłość Demograficzna Polski* 2016, vol. 38, no. 3, pp. 131–150).

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occupied in accordance with the normal functions of the organism."[6] Cities evolved into unique works of art that at once reflected the ideologies of their eras, while the human body adapted itself to life in the new surroundings, which ultimately ceased to be considered a threat.[7] The "metropolis" became a space where interpersonal relationships consisted in mingling with an anonymous crowd, one's privacy fully assured. Łódź, however, additionally developed into an "industrialized [outgrowth,] functionalized in accordance with the requirements of production."[8]

Here, industrialization was accepted with reluctance. For example, in April 1861, and thus in the very beginnings of the city, the weavers rebelled against the introduction of machines.[9] Nevertheless, several dozen years later the wealth and industrial potential of Łódź were highlighted by the number of looms and spindles in relation to the overall number of textile factories and employees.[10]

The city's development was interspersed with various crises, mainly economic.[11] After the First World War, the textile sector lost its impetus. Too many changes had occurred, for example, at the geopolitical level, while during its occupation of Łódź, the German Army had plundered the factories of machinery. Industry did not regain its former position during the interwar period.[12]

Łódź was, however, "a city straining towards the future – both vanguard and victim of the changes taking place. Its history may be interpreted as a long series of struggles against the challenges of modernization, combined with an ever-present desire to resolve the problems of the epoch and become a truly modern city."[13] This meant that it was necessary to programme the city at the level of social infrastructure, which would provide support to its residents, and help them improve their standard of living. The idea was to "create a city that would develop harmoniously, in tune with the challenges of contemporaneity."[14] These problems occupied the attention of a part of the opinion-forming milieux of Łódź (including journalists and feature writers, community workers, the intelligentsia, political circles, and, at least to an extent, the wealthiest citizens, who provided for the various charitable institutions and campaigns until the outbreak of the

6 T. Peiper, *Miasto, masa, maszyna*, in *Pisma wybrane,* Wrocław–Warszawa–Kraków–Gdańsk, 1979, p. 10.

7 Ibidem, pp. 13–14.

8 W. Marzec, A. Zysiak, "Młyn biopolityki. Topografie władzy peryferyjnego kapitalizmu na łódzkim osiedlu robotniczym," *Praktyka Teoretyczna* 2011, no. 2, p. 68.

9 A. Jabłońska, "Ślady buntu łódzkich tkaczy obecne w dzisiejszej Łodzi – miasto, ludzie, wydarzenia," in *Bunt, masa, maszyna. Protesty łódzkich tkaczy w kwietniu 1861 roku*, eds N. Królikowska, C. Pawlak. Łódź, 2011, pp. 32–42. These demonstrations had a primarily economic significance, although some raised political issues (opposition to the partitioning powers).

10 E. Rosset, *Łódź. Miasto pracy*, Łódź, 1929, p. 13.

11 The years of crisis: 1844–1845, 1847–1848, 1852–1854, 1861–1865 (J. Fijałek, *Instytucje pomocy materialno-zdrowotnej w Łodzi i okręgu łódzkim (wiek XIX do roku 1870)*, Łódź, 1962, pp. 200–201).

12 See W. Pawlak, *W rytmie fabrycznych syren. Łódź między wojnami*, Łódź, 1984.

13 A. Zysiak, K. Śmiechowski, K. Piskała, W. Marzec, K. Kaźmierska, J. Burski, *Z bawełny i dymu. Łódź – miasto przemysłowe i dyskursy asynchronicznej nowoczesności 1897–1994*, Łódź, 2021, p. 11.

14 Ibidem, p. 12.

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Second World War). Issues of this sort were an element of a broader problem, which concerned the essence of modernity and the meaning of the term "a modern city," whereas, in the case of Łódź, there was an additional matter to be resolved, namely, in what did the otherness and untypicalness of this city consist (while the fact that it was "different" and "distinct" was proven by a comparison of its development with that of other Polish cities)? These questions were important, for its growth at the turn of the 20th century and in subsequent decades was subordinate to the right of domination, subjugation, and attainment of prosperity at the expense of others (anti-colonial and post-colonial discourses). A critique has emerged that turns "attention to the global systems of dependency," further declaring that, in the Western model, success and development were "the result of the exploitation taking place in the slave plantations of the global South."[15] Nevertheless, the non-Western – that is, small – centres aspired to this model, although the perception of modernity and the striving for its attainment were subject to local contexts. Every centre undergoing modernization not only reflected worldwide trends, but also supplemented them with its own pre-modern structures of functioning. Viewed against this backdrop, Łódź appeared as a sort of paradox[16], for despite its peripheral placement in relation to the global system, the transformations which it faced may be compared with the rapid development experienced by, for example, Manchester or New York. In Łódź, however, the process of rapid change left out culture, institutions of social life, education, and art – there was no "linear" civilizational progress.

The Poverty of Łódź

Until the First World War

Researchers studying the local press from before the First World War have written that "a considerable part of Polish public opinion perceived Łódź as a sui generis challenge. The local Polish intelligentsia had difficulty expressing its own vision of the city. Problems were spoken about openly, with emphasis being placed, among others, on the weakness of the local cultural elites, their alienation from the world of Polish culture, on class tensions, exploitation, and the severe underdevelopment of municipal infrastructure. Journalists engaged in a creative modification of the concept of social ties and passed from moralizing on the poor to announcing philanthropic projects that were to make up for the shortage of social institutions, and thereafter demanded that the state assume a key role in the implementation of social policy."[17] Over time (if we for a moment leave the confines of the analysed period, which stretches from the turn of the 20th century to 1918), those supporting the Polish Socialist Party took on the idea of so-called municipal Socialism. This narrative presented the city as an area where the fight for a new, justice-based social order should take place. It was the needs of the workers that were to determine the direction of municipal social policy in Łódź.[18]

15 Ibidem, p. 13.
16 Ibidem, p. 15.
17 Ibidem, p. 20.
18 Ibidem, p. 21.

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The conception, although chronologically subsequent, was concordant with the assessment of both the roots of injustice in the city, and the causes of poverty from the beginnings of industrial Łódź: the peasants and other labourers who migrated to the city "in reality often only exchanged toil in the fields for toil in the factories, without any prospects for further social advancement."[19] More importantly, the ease with which unqualified labour could be recruited led to the further lowering of costs of production. Those working in the factories (including women and children, who were paid from 30 to 70 % less than men) received such paltry wages that they could live only very modestly, or indeed poorly, whereas "the wages of a man employed at a textile plant were usually insufficient to maintain his entire family," and thus it became necessary for women and children to work.[20]

Using the nomenclature of our times, we may say that very low incomes translated into an equally low standard of material living, health, and nutrition. In Łódź, tasks associated with the provision of social support for persons facing economic hardship were, just as in "tsarist Russia, usually assumed by private enterprises, which to some extent strove to ensure (of their own volition or under pressure from the government) basic social and health care and education."[21]

The census of 1897 – when Łódź had achieved the status of a large municipal centre – confirmed the high percentage of children and people able to work (aged 15–59) in the population.[22] Women formed the majority in the 15–24 age group, which showed how far the local textile industry had impacted migrations. The high numerical strength of the lowest earners – the "working poor" – presents the nature of the poverty of the times.[23] Jerzy Dzieciuchowicz added that "(…) in the 50 and over age group, excessive male mortality led to a surplus of women that increased with age";[24] it should be stressed that these women also grew poorer with age. The census further showed that people employed in industry and the crafts formed the largest group (58.2 % of those working

19 W. Marzec, K. Śmiechowski, A. Zysiak, "Wkroczenie do przemysłowego świata (1897–1914)," in A. Zysiak et al., *Z bawełny i dymu*…, p. 37.

20 Ibidem, p. 38.

21 Ibidem, p. 39.

22 J. Dzieciuchowicz, *Ludność Łodzi – ludność i przemiany strukturalne*, Łódź, 2014, p. 22.

23 The "working poor" is a term that entered the scholarly debate only in the 20th century. It serves to describe a phenomenon of the labour market which is typical of neoliberal capitalism and may be defined: "Persons who are professionally active and attempt to maintain themselves on the labour market by taking up low paid work (…) their incomes are not sufficient to ensure a suitable standard of living" (K. Drela, "Rynek pracy i biedni pracujący," *Prace Naukowe Uniwersytetu Ekonomicznego we Wrocławiu. Ekonomia* 2015, no. 401, p. 107). Although the concept is dependent on economic factors and the realities of a specific era, selected properties of the condition, and in particular low paid and irregular employment, which can easily be terminated and does not allow a person to satisfy their basic needs, bring the "working poor" of today closer to the "working poor" from the beginning of the 20th century.

24 J. Dzieciuchowicz, op. cit., pp. 22–23.

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in the city towards the end of the 19th century). They were dependent on the situation on the labour market and the financial standing of the plants which employed them.[25]
The contrasts that existed in pre-First World War Łódź – the splendour of the factory owners' palaces and villas, surrounded by squalid quarters inhabited by labourers and the poor – were clearly noted at the time. For this reason, the press focused much of its attention on phenomena such as penury, prostitution, and epidemics of infectious diseases.[26] Demands were made for the reconstruction of the city, so that a clean break could be made with the lopsided distribution of residential buildings of varying quality; the overall dirtiness of the city was equally decried.[27]
In Łódź, one of the greatest problems concerned the lack of public institutions for the administration of social welfare. The few existing state and municipal structures were supported by initiatives launched by various industrialists. For want of any systemic solutions, public opinion applauded these activities, however the so-called capricious philanthropy engaged in by the industrialists' wives was ridiculed and condemned.[28] Furthermore, explanations to the effect that the city's working poor had come into being "as a consequence of processes of urbanization or due to the misfortune that had befallen the intellectually limited and morally corrupt masses, who may at best be offered slivers of compassion and charitable assistance" were gradually rejected.[29] The existence of the poorest social stratum (which also included many of those who were actually employed) started to be perceived as the product of the prevailing economic and market order, additionally facilitated by the stance of private entrepreneurs, who now came to be viewed as rapacious.[30] Interestingly, a very pragmatic logic was applied: "If we help the poor today, this will not be detrimental to us, too, in the future."

Until the Second World War

In the interwar period, the nature of debates on the city, its residents, and social issues changed: industry found itself in the throes of a postwar slowdown, and the Great Depression soon followed, while the political climate – both national and international – devolved (the growth of totalitarian ideologies).
After 1918, the municipal authorities came to the conclusion that the city was neglected and that in the past numerous social issues had been abandoned. The lack of municipal infrastructure, existing social inequalities, and the underdevelopment of social life were striking.[31] The absence of a municipal hospital, maternity refuges, senior citizen's and children's homes, night shelters, etc., was seen as exceptionally worrying. At the time, it was considered that this plethora of problems had been brought about by two factors:

25 See ibidem, p. 26.
26 W. Marzec, K. Śmiechowski, A. Zysiak, op. cit., p. 56.
27 See ibidem, p. 57.
28 Ibidem, p. 73.
29 Ibidem, p. 69.
30 Ibidem, p. 69.
31 K. Piskała, "Polityka demokratyczna i wizja nowoczesnego miasta (1918–1923)," in A. Zysiak et al., *Z bawełny i dymu*…, p. 107.

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the historical deficiencies of the tsarist system, and capitalist relations, in which profit took precedence over the good of society.[32]

During the analysed period, the modernism of Łódź took on the form of a progressive municipal social policy. Assessments were made of the origins of the situation, and remedies proposed. Programmes of repair and models of good practice were to be based on the experiences of the West and on Socialist theory.[33] Work was commenced on the implementation of a new plan of spatial management, the objective of which was to separate industrial, recreational, and hospital zones in various parts of the city.[34]

But national political events and the economic downturn triggered by the Great Depression forced a modification of these schemes, as well as of the intended construction of public utility buildings, a water and sewage system, and residential housing (which did not, however, focus on the poor[35]). In Łódź, this led to a spate of strikes, which erupted with some regularity from March 1927 to March 1936. In addition, the local "financial situation, despite repeated appeals for support to the central government in Warsaw, was dire basically throughout the entire interwar period, and thus the scale of investments made in successive years turned out to be disproportionate."[36]

The city's problems were not rectified by 1939, however their proposed solutions reflected the ideas of social support and solidarity that guided the new Polish state. This marked a reorientation of 19th-century social policy towards the involvement of government institutions and local self-governmental bodies.[37] Łódź at the time faced numerous difficulties: "poverty, a lack of employment, the non-observance of workers' rights, insufficient financial protection for the elderly and other social groups, a lack of housing, the existential problems of families, issues concerning child welfare, and the hazardous situation of employed women (…)."[38]

By the end of the 1930s, a social policy based on the organized provision of care for the most vulnerable groups and individuals had still not been fully implemented. A variety of circumstances – many political in nature – simply made it impossible to enact the necessary legislation.[39]

32 Piskała, op. cit., ibidem.
33 Ibidem, p. 108.
34 Ibidem, p. 113.
35 Kamil Piskała wrote: "Łódź continues to be viewed as a city that was exceptionally badly developed and neglected, brimming with contrasts and overpopulated – in 1931, no less than 63 % of apartments in Łódź comprised just one room, while a further 19 % had no more than two" (ibidem, op. cit., p. 151).
36 Ibidem.
37 P. Grata, *Polityka społeczna Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej. Uwarunkowania – instytucje – działania*, Rzeszów, 2013. p. 10.
38 Ibidem, p. 11.
39 Ibidem, p. 299.

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Felt Poverty

When reading interviews held during the analysed period (from the turn of the 20th century to 1939) with the workers of Łódź who had been born at or around 1900, and also with their descendants, we may well come to the conclusion that they present experiences and descriptions of poverty specific to the city. Their reminiscences were written down towards the end of the 1960s and at the beginning of the 1970s, and so the interviewees made frequent references to their youth. Speaking from an adult perspective – many were by then elderly pensioners – they mentioned their living conditions and the worsening financial plight of their families. The events they described had taken place several dozen years earlier.

Contemporary methods of researching the essence of poverty are based on a combination of methodology and theory straddling the economic and social sciences. Today's approach

> adopts the level of income (…) as the point of division between those who are poor and those who are not. In research practice, use is most often made of three parameters determining the threshold of poverty, namely, the basket method, the relative poverty line, and the subjective poverty line. The first of these is based on the value of baskets of goods which serve to determine the scope and form of satisfaction of basic needs. (…) The second – the relative poverty line, which is fixed at 40 %, 50 % or 60 % of average income or the median of income – allows us to distinguish those households whose level of consumption differs from the average. (…) The subjective poverty line is an assessment of the income situation of a household, presented on a scale ranging from very good to very bad, in terms of the sufficiency or insufficiency of monies required to satisfy needs. (…) This does not mean, however, that the attainment of a slightly larger income will protect from want, for this is still tantamount to functioning in a reality of deprivation, with needs being satisfied to a varying degree. Research into poverty has shown that the scale of problems arising from limited access to financial resources results in a vast array of unsatisfied needs and a low level of the competences required to build social safety.[40]

But such an advanced scholarly apparatus cannot be applied to materials that were created a long time ago and therefore do not contain the data required to conduct research of this type. Nevertheless, the historical description of conditions which we now call "poverty" or "destitution" retains a certain universalism of feelings and attributes. First and foremost, it references hunger, coldness, filth, cramped living conditions, a sense of threat, and a lack of access to various goods; in short, we may term this "deprivation". In the studied epoch, impressions of such type (today used to define the subjective poverty

40 K. Roszak, "Opracowanie eksperckie: Dyskryminacja z powodu niskiego statusu społeczno-ekonomicznego," in *Diagnoza nierówności w Łodzi. Stan badań i rekomendacje dla Wieloletniego Programu Działań Antydyskryminacyjnych*, Łódź, 2019 [internal publication of the Center of Social Innovations of the University of Łódź], pp. 91–92.

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line) resulted from low incomes and the economic crises afflicting family members (due to dismissals, lockouts, strikes). An important element would have been the death or sickness of adults, amost particularly men, who supported the household (and received relatively higher wages). Diseases not only excluded these family members from the labour market, but also entailed expenses on treatment, which, if paid, further increased pauperization; in fact, however, these expenses were considered excessive by many and thus seldom incurred, thereby leading to a high mortality rate among both adults and children.

The situation was compounded by the generally inferior living conditions; these were nearly impossible to escape, for moving from one cheap apartment to another offered no protection from squalidity. Hunger or temporary malnutrition were by no means uncommon. People often had to make do without basic household articles, and sometimes even without clothes. Some found not having an education, even basic, very troublesome, and certain accounts mention the inability to read and write as barriers to the betterment of one's life and employment opportunities.

One of the interviewees, a woman,[41] recalled that although her family's apartment was located in a new building, it was so cold and damp that before they went to bed, her father heated the children's quilts on a stove, while their beds were moved for the night to a room that was heated. Following his death, she and her siblings (three in all), together with their mother and an aunt, moved to another apartment, where the women opened a tailor shop.

Another interlocutor[42] said that if his father had not been illiterate, he would not have been forced to be a menial labourer greasing machines to spin cotton "at Scheibler's," and, instead, could have become a foreman. His mother worked there as a spinner. The interlocutor further added that, out of poverty, he had gone to work in the same factory as his parents at the age of fifteen. He was employed thanks to his father's connections. In particular, he recalled the philanthropic activity of "old Mrs Scheibler," whose day-nursery had sunk into his mind. He considered want as the cause of marital quarrels, and stressed that before the war his parents, old and no longer employed, had to turn to their children for assistance. In his own old age and retirement, he felt self-sufficient and independent from others.

The next person[43], a woman, although she provided little information about her childhood, remembered the 16-square-metre apartment in which her family of six (parents and four children) lived. Summing up those times, she stated: "Our material situation was rotten – we were cold and hungry." Similar living conditions were recalled by another interlocutor,[44] who, as a toddler, moved with his parents to the tenement blocks Scheibler built for the factory workers. The room in which they lived was small (probably with a metric area similar to that mentioned above) and had to accommodate eight peo-

41 File AZE B/1507, interview conducted in the winter of 1976–77. The interviewee was born in 1893.
42 File AZE B 1575 (IHKM 181/27), interview conducted in 1969. The interviewee was born in 1906.
43 File AZE B 1576 (IHKM 181/52), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1928.
44 File AZE B 1577 (IHKM 181/46), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1902.

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ple. Three or four of the youngest children would be put to sleep in one bed, and straw mattresses were laid out on the floor.

The next interviewee[45] remembered her childhood as happy; since, however, her family comprised seven members, and it became increasingly more difficult to find work, they experienced poverty when their father was not employed. When her older siblings grew up and went to work, they "got by".

A different interlocutor[46] – a generation older than the previous – recalled how her family lived in the attic of a tenement building. Her elder sister was sent to work at age eight. When the First World War broke out and Łódź fell into the grip of poverty and hunger, her father took her to a rural area, where she helped out by grazing goats in return for board and lodging. She had bad memories of her childhood: "The children raised themselves, mucked up and bespattered with spittle. (…) Our childhood was miserable. There were five of us children in the house (…). We had no joy from the youngest age. I was nine years old and I was already working." She emphasized that "everyone did everything in their power to keep their jobs," although "when one of us worked from home, the others would be busy re-educating themselves." The woman remembered that she was careful how she acted around some people in order to keep her job. She mentioned that they did not eat meat, as it was expensive. The family's daily diet included potatoes, buckwheat (prepared dry), and barley soup; only on a Sunday would she buy half a kilo of ribs. They also ate "horsemeat sprinkled with vinegar and seasoned; we would buy a whole cow's belly and cook tripe, anything to fend off the hunger." They could afford to buy fifteen eggs per month; these were only given to the children (of whom there were seven) – each received half an egg in order to make them last longer. The adults bought vodka only occasionally, "because wages were meagre." She also remembered quarrelling with her own husband when he was out of work. She had one dress for the whole work week, which she laundered every Saturday, while on Sundays and holidays she wore a different, better, dress. Workers who received higher wages would buy themselves a coat (when going to the factory and on other regular days; female labourers would normally cover themselves with a shawl, which constituted their entire outdoor clothing). When she put on her coat, she would look around to make sure "that everybody could see." Poverty permeated every aspect of social life: being chosen for a godparent was valued, but "people often declined because they had no money. So normally parents asked those whom they knew to have some cash". On several occasions, therefore, the interviewee declined being a godparent, which hurt, "but there was no money." Of her seven children, only two made it to adulthood. When a child died, she would take down a sheer curtain or simply take a piece of bedlinen and wrap it around the body for burial, as "there was no money for a proper garment." And when one of the children fell ill with meningitis, she sold her wedding ring to get money for treatment. That was the only valuable thing she owned.

45 File AZE B 1578 (IHKM 181/38), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1926.
46 File AZE B 1579 (IHKM 181/2), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1902.

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When recalling her childhood, another interlocutor[47] recalled how poverty looked from the perspective of a child: "I was the eldest, and I looked after the other children [she had eight siblings]; children died often. Five of my brothers and sisters died of tuberculosis, they were barely in their teens."

A different interviewee,[48] who grew up at the turn of the 20th century, reminisced that "parents would add" – enlist – "children so that they would be employed at the factory." When an inspection was made at a plant, children were told to hide so that the owner would not be fined. He himself completed just three grades at the Scheibler school and immediately went to work at the factory, as his father wanted. His recollections also touched upon the charitable and social activities of the Scheiblers; for example, when "old Scheibler" went to work and passed by some beggars, he would always give them something – "he never left anyone." Everyone received something. The next interlocutor[49] assessed Scheibler's behaviour: "The factory owner wanted to be seen as a democrat with a kind heart. The businessmen tried to outvie each other when it came to matters of social aid."

Another interviewee,[50] a man, stated that his family was relatively wealthy, for his father worked as a fitter at the Scheibler plant. When remembering the interwar period, he emphasized that, simply put, the world was divided into those who earned more and those who earned less, with the former leading less stressful lives.[51]

The issue of social rights – also as a turn of phrase – appeared mainly in the recollections of former members of the Polish Socialist Party. One of them[52] stressed that such rights had not existed before the Second World War, and that only by joining the Polish Socialist Party and paying fees could one hope to receive a sickness allowance or a funerary benefit.

A different person[53] emphasized the workers' dependence on foremen to keep their jobs. As she remembered, employment was a privilege and a great unknown, for "you did not know whether you would be going to work the next day – you had to take care not to fall into disfavour with the foreman." Because of the "uncertain times" in which she lived, she and her husband were afraid to have more than one child. She worked during the Great Depression. "The factory operated for three, four or five days per week," she noted. "We earned little. You couldn't afford anything, we would pay for clothes in instalments."

47 File AZE B 1606 (IHKM 181/48), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1902.
48 File AZE B 1581 (IHKM 181/54), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1895.
49 File AZE B 1619 (IHKM 181/17), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1911.
50 File AZE B 12583 (IHKM 181/9), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1900.
51 He further recalled the plight of those who came to Łódź from rural areas: many would be put up by friends or relatives and spend the six-day work week in the city, only to return to the country for the Sunday, where they toiled in the fields. They were strongly tied to the rural land, property, and relations. But after working in the city for a longer period of time, most would stay there permanently with their families, severing all contact with the old home.
52 File AZE B 1584 (IHKM 181/39), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1912.
53 File AZE B 1588 (IHKM 181/34), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1905.

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Yet another interviewee[54] observed how you could slide into poverty when your family increased: when her mother gave birth to her third child, she was fired. Her father, too, was unemployed at the time, and the family fell into destitution (her reminiscences concerned the years 1905–1910).

In order not to deepen their poverty, they economized on everything – also at the expense of their children. One of the interlocutors[55] recollected that when his father bought coal, the four siblings helped carry it home, so that he would not have to pay for transport and unloading.

The reminiscences of the next interlocutor[56] confirm the motif of dependence on one's superiors, for example the foremen (irrespective of their ethnic origin, although over time the position became polonized): "You always had to be humble, because if someone took a dislike to you, you'd be fired."

When there was not enough money for something, one would borrow from others.[57] Trusted neighbours, who would help out with loans, food, and clothing, particularly for weddings and funerals, were very important. Trust was built up by giving back the borrowed money or clothes, and returning the giver's favour.

In order to reduce their costs of living, people bought food directly from farmers[58], while women shopped for cheap meat and herring at Jewish butchers and other similar outlets. The interviewee further stressed that, before the Second World War, people were driven into poverty not by the excessive price of food, but by the lack of employment opportunities. He also recalled another form of self-help – providing children with additional food; this grassroots aid was organized by various private individuals for children from families in which the fathers drank or had been laid off. Furthermore, he remembered the principles according to which social assistance was given in the interwar period: an important actor in the process was the neighbourhood policeman, who would visit families, describe their plight, and issue certificates entitling them to an allowance or enabling them to register with a social welfare committee, which would then provide food. Children from such families received additional nutrition at school (specifically a glass of warm milk) and could go to free summer play centres.

In his recollections, he also described the poor whom he saw in the city – a topic hardly ever touched upon in sources of this type. He remembered people who even today are associated with extreme poverty: gatherers of scraps and those who rummaged through the rubbish. Using local slang, he called them "*klojbers*,"[59] who stood out by carrying large sacks – which were tied with string – and hooks. They searched through the re-

54 File AZE B 1631, interview conducted in 1975. Interviewee born in 1910.

55 File AZE B 1590 (IHKM 181/1), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1913.

56 File AZE B 1601 (IHKM 181/50), interview conducted in 1969. Interviewee born in 1906.

57 File AZE B 1629, interview conducted in 1975. Interviewee born in 1910.

58 File AZE B 1633, interview conducted in 1975, date of birth of interviewee unknown.

59 It may well be that this word is related to another term coined in Łódź – "*kojber*," which is defined as a heavy sack, bundle, or string bag, especially when"rag dealers" walked around with enormous sacks into which they gathered their prizes (D. Bieńkowska, M. Cybulski, E. Umińska-Tytoń, *Słownik dwudziestowiecznej Łodzi. Konteksty historyczne, społeczne, kulturowe*, Łódź, 2007, p. 216).

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fuse and used the hooks to pull out rags, scrap metal, paper, and bottles, which they later sold. Another common sight in the streets and courtyards were the "rag dealers" ("*szmotek*" in Polish),[60] who exchanged old rags for plates, pots, and other items, and then sold them. Their "products" surely were invaluable to many working people. He recalled one such product: using glue made from rye flour, they would make, for example, carpet slippers from rags, which their wives would sell in the marketplaces, streets, and courtyards.

Conclusion

These recollections are only a selection from a body comprising a few thousand accounts that reflect the poverty in Łódź. The typical aspects of this poverty were usually accompanied by a feeling of the uncertainty of one's fate. Such memories registered that which reflected the variability of one's own life, or that of one's family or acquaintances. Interviewees returned to events that marked the point at which a favourable situation started to deteriorate. For the "working poor" of that era, the lack of stability and the necessity of living from hand to mouth were brought about by more general developments, such as the Great Depression or other economic and political downturns impacting the local labour market. But their plight was also dependent on the decisions of people holding specific positions (such as foremen).

Experiences of privation alternate with recollections of self-help, solidarity, and getting by as a community or on one's own. People sought support among their neighbours, within their own professional groups, and among family members. Education and limiting the number of one's offspring offered a way out. The greatest danger brought on by poverty was a loss of health, which could sometimes result in death (this is illustrated by the stories of children who died from untreated diseases caused by malnutrition and unimaginable living conditions). Furthermore, poverty often led to the disintegration of familial and marital life. The accounts describe quarrels and alcoholism, and children being handed over to relatives or even complete strangers – to be raised, for work, or in order to receive additional food.

Curiously, there are no recollections referring to differences in the degree of poverty between various ethnic groups living in Łódź at that time. It should be added that animosities between Poles and Germans were not very often alluded to, although in some of the accounts (particularly those of persons born towards the end of the 19th century) foremen were remembered as people of German descent; over time, however, this changed. No references were made to the ethnicity or nationality of the rich – the owners of the factories and the tenement buildings – and the poor, or to that of the workers at large, which could otherwise have been used to concoct convenient explanations for the causes of indigence.

In the cited materials, poverty appears to be the result of adversity and the economic system, personified by the industrialists – although the emphasis was on the existence

60 Also written "*smot*," "*szmot*," or "*smotek*" (D. Bieńkowska, M. Cybulski, E. Umińska-Tytoń, op. cit., p. 270).

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of an unjust system, in which the latter, too, were only a cog. It is obvious that the interviewees' specific assessment of the past was influenced by the period in which their accounts were gathered (end of the 1960s and beginning of the 1970s). It was not unusual for the interviews to end with a comparison of labour relations and the standard of living in pre-war Poland with those in the Communist state, which always emerged victorious. Although interlocutors did not extol the virtues of Socialism, we may assume that some applied a certain degree of self-censorship. Their recollections of pre-war poverty often exaggerated the progress (actual or perceived) that the interviewees felt had been achieved after the war. Specifically, they mentioned the common right to education, safety nets that help the elderly and the disabled, the health care system – which encompassed in particular the elderly, women, and children – and the comparatively broad range of social rights.

The poverty described in the archival accounts afflicted everyone – both families and individuals. The documents are also a register of subjective feelings. Penury was perceived in the context of objective situations, such as illness, a lack of education, or the death of a family member, which would completely change a person's life, with an assessment of the alteration being made subjectively.

It is worth noting here that after the First World War, the economic crises that affected the residents of Łódź – among other places – were brought on not only by external trends, but also by typically local factors: "low productivity, the predominance of primitive agriculture, and the insufficient development of industry and modern services." [61] Such an assessment serves to further challenge the assumption that the modernist project – in Łódź, too – had ended in success.

Another issue concerns the difficulty of researching poverty. This stems from the long absence of the topic from the scholarly and public discourse in Poland and Europe[62], although penury in its many forms was frequently described[63] in the world of culture in many different eras, not only that analysed here. Works presenting poverty were subservient to a multitude of different social, political, and ethical programmes.

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61 J. Żarnowski, "Rola państwa i jego instytucji w przemianach społecznych w Polsce (1918–1939)," in *Społeczeństwo międzywojenne: nowe spojrzenie. Metamorfozy społeczne*, vol. 10, eds W. Mędrzecki, J. Żarnowski, Warszawa, 2015, p. 59.

62 This non-presence was influenced by both political and systemic determinants; for example, when Poland was a member of the Soviet bloc, not a single scholarly work was written in the country with the word "poverty" in its title. The issue was also taboo in Hungary and Czechoslovakia, where "the officially accepted term that could be used to describe poverty and the poor was the euphemism *a section of the population with limited opportunities for consumption*" (E. Tarkowska, "Wprowadzenie. Bieda, historia i kultura," in *Zrozumieć biednego: o dawnej i obecnej biedzie w Polsce*, ed. E. Tarkowska, Warszawa, 2000, p. 9).

63 For example, in 2011 the Stadtmuseum Simeonstift of Trieste together with the Rheinischen Landesmuseum organized an exhibition of paintings devoted to the topic of poverty, *Poverty – Perspectives in Art and Society* (10.04 – 20.08.2011). In literature, a number of eminent authors – also Polish – depicted the world of poverty: Charles Dickens, Fyodor Dostoevsky, Honoré de Balzac, Victor Hugo, Émile Zola, Eliza Orzeszkowa, Bolesław Prus, Stefan Żeromski, and Zofia Nałkowska, among others.

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Assumptions concerning the specificity of the experience of poverty normally place the poor within the realm of cultural "muteness." This "voicelessness" was frequently strengthened (depending on the world view of the poor person himself, or the observer, or researchers from a given place and time) by the feelings of shame and guilt that were commonly attributed to the poor; it could also have been a reaction to a specific discourse on responsibility, or to compassion, or pity.[64]

On the other hand, such cultural "muteness" could have been the effect of the "non-historicity" of the poor, similar to that of other social strata considered marginal (including the so-called dregs of society). Zbigniew Galor has presented a viable typology of the reasons for the "lesser importance" of these social strata. Of key importance here would be the fact that their lives are not (auto)documented.[65] Galor, however, while seeking the causes of this state, declared that the so-called dregs (and thus, by analogy, the poor) "have a twofold impact on society (…): positive and negative."[66] The former occurs because the system of support that addresses those who are excluded and marginalized (appropriate to the realities of the era) is a field for the self-realization of the rest of society, which reiterates and thereby recreates its system of values. The negative impact comes about when the marginalized are considered as the exploited, while others draw an advantage from their presence. The influence of the socially "mute" groups is not, therefore, non-existent, but slight. Furthermore, the theory as to the lack of "historians," interpreted broadly as spokespersons for the affairs of the poor, appears indefensible. To some extent, this role was assumed by artists, social activists, politicians, and researchers. Naturally, we should at this point recognize the myriad reservations expressed against this type of "representation," including the semantic (regarding the term "spokesperson" or related words) in the case of groups that so often are so differently placed in the system of social stratification.

But the thesis of voicelessness – understood as including the poor – remains strong.[67] While to a certain extent true, it is sometimes contradicted by the archival materials whose fragments have been used in this article to supplement theoretical and fact-based knowledge, and also problem-focused analyses.

64 See E. Tarkowska, op. cit., pp. 20–21. Presently, however, we could say that the approach has changed, see http://rszarf.ips.uw.edu.pl/uiws/polemikaGW2008.pdf (accessed 31.03.2022).

65 Z. Galor, "Margines społeczny Drugiej Rzeczpospolitej jako warstwa 'niehistoryczna'?," in *Margines społeczny Drugiej Rzeczpospolitej. Metamorfozy społeczne, vol. 6*, ed. M. Rodak, Warszawa, 2013, pp. 30–31.

66 Ibidem, p. 32.

67 See, for example, E. Tarkowska, op. cit., pp. 32–33.

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All Quiet on the Eastern Front

An Analysis of the Figures of Ruler, Executioner and Victim on the Example of Photographs

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The workers' revolt in Łódź causes a number of different reactions among scholars, although one may get the impression that for a long time there was a clear lack of any deeper interest in the topic. In her analysis of the opinions of Polish historians on the Revolution of 1905, Anna Żarnowska writes that it was only in recent years that there appeared signs of a return to more intensive research.[1] The situation is no different in the case of social researchers, with the exception being Wiktor Marzec's book devoted to this social rebellion and the reactions which it provoked.[2] Also of importance here are the research and artistic activities conducted in the *herstory* trend by the Kolektyw Kobiety znad Łódki group. In the public space of Łódź, the event is represented by Kazimierz Karpiński's Monument to Revolutionary Action, which was unveiled in 1975 in a park outside the city centre. There is also a street running through the city centre whose name – ulica Rewolucji 1905 roku – commemorates the revolution. Further, one of the tenement houses standing along this city thoroughfare has been decorated with a mural entitled "You live in the city of revolution". However, the events of 1905–1907 seem to be insufficiently present in the popular historical memory of the residents of Łódź. The present article focuses on a very small fragment of this history, and its research base comprises only three photographs from the collections of the Museum of Independence Traditions. The text consists of three parts, of which the first is a necessary and at once condensed introduction to the events of the revolutionary period. The second presents the human chain of power and violence that started with the tsar, whose consent and will ultimately led to the actions of the executioner who carried out the death sentences. The third and final part is an attempt at interpreting the three photographs taken in the Łódź prison in 1908. These images represent the three titular figures, and also specific people involved in the tragic events. Rooted in history, they also uncover what Roland Barthes termed the "third sense," and this compels me not only to interpret them in the

1 A. Żarnowska, "Rewolucja 1905 roku w opinii polskich historyków: i dziś – próba podsumowania," in *Dziedzictwo Rewolucji 1905–1907,* eds A. Żarnowska, A. Kołodziejczyk, A. Stawarz, P. Tusiński, Warszawa–Radom, 2007, p. 40.

2 W. Marzec, *Rebelia i reakcja. Rewolucja 1905 roku i plebejskie doświadczenie polityczne,* Wydawnictwo UŁ, Universitas, Łódź–Kraków, 2016.

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context of the revolutionary events from over a hundred years ago, but also, and in an unavoidable way, to give an outline of what was happening at the time in the Russian Empire.

Łódź. The Revolution of 1905

The uprising in Łódź was an armed rebellion of workers which initiated the Revolution of 1905 in the Kingdom of Poland. Labourers fought for the improvement of living conditions, and presented a number of social demands, but they were also battling one of the partitioning powers, and thus we should keep in mind the pro-independence nature of the revolt. The Łódź mutiny, which was triggered by the massacre of workers in St. Petersburg on what has become known as "Bloody Sunday," had, however, been brewing for a considerable time. "It was a manifestation of general disagreement to the unyielding implementation of the oppressive and extremely authoritarian policy of denationalization by the state apparatus, as well as an act of opposition to the capitalist labour regime and living conditions that offended human dignity".[3] The first actions undertaken by the proletarians consisted mainly of strikes and the gradual formulation of demands towards factory owners; among other things, they called for an eight-hour work day, the establishment of sickness funds, and the introduction of a minimum wage. Other considerations included curbing the abuses committed by foremen and factory managers against women and implementing an insurance system. The workers were followed in their demands by other employees, civil servants, shop assistants and craftsmen. The concept of active opposition was quickly taken up by youths of school age, who were at the time forced to participate in a completely Russified education system. They called for, inter alia, teaching to be conducted in the mother tongue and the introduction of subjects such as the history and geography of Poland. We can therefore see that social and national issues were both important in this struggle. Resistance took various forms, ranging from strikes and demonstrations to active fighting with the tsarist apparatus of power – the police and the military. Barricades were put up in the city, and labourers took up arms against the decidedly better equipped army. Attempts were made to suppress the general strike through violence, an intensification of terror, and lockouts. The funerals of killed workers were also a pretext for rallies and protests. Often a single shot caused a crowd of thousands to panic. Such was the case on 21 June 1905, when workmen participating in a funeral parade were slaughtered. Russian soldiers summarily killed the escapees and those who had hid in the gates of tenement houses. At the same time, the workers, defending themselves, shot back at the attacking Cossacks. The events of that day sparked another wave of violence. Police stations as well as Russian officials and military barracks were all targeted. Due to the escalation of the fighting, an additional five regiments of the tsarist army were brought to Łódź. "When the Russian army felt that they were the master of the situation, a wave of bloody repressions swept across the city. The soldiers tormented the population in a most licentious manner. Both guilty and innocent were shot at. Shots were fired at gates and windows.

3 K. Piskała, *Zapomniana Rewolucja,* in *Rewolucja. Przewodnik Krytyki Politycznej,* Wydawnictwo Krytyki Politycznej, Warszawa, 2013, p. 25.

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Many people were killed in their own homes".[4] According to an official statement, on 23 June 164 people were killed and 152 registered as wounded. We could of course give more such examples from the period of the revolution, however this is not the main purpose of the present text. On a side note, it is difficult not to notice that these accounts are frighteningly similar to those coming in from present-day Ukraine. As we can see, the modus operandi of the Russian aggressor has remained unchanged, with indiscriminate terror directed against all and sundry remaining a key element of state military doctrine. Another method used by the tsarist apparatus of terror was the organization of provocations, supplemented by the establishment of a network of informers co-operating with the Okhrana (Department for Protecting the Public Security and Order). Yet another way of breaking up workers' unity consisted in fuelling anti-Semitism – "a tried and trusted vaccine that poisoned the politically aware class movement".[5]

The closing of factories and barring labourers from entering the workplace deprived them of earning opportunities, pushing thousands into extreme poverty. The arrested fighters were brought before the courts, which did not hesitate to apply the death penalty or sentence the accused to long-term imprisonment or deportation?. The revolution gradually petered out, and its last notable act was the Łódź strike of 1 May 1907. Of all the revolts and uprisings undertaken by Poles against the partitioning powers during the more than one hundred years of Poland's political non-existence, the Revolution of 1905 seems to be considered the least important, is the least frequently recalled, and remains almost completely uncelebrated. However, as Kamil Piskała argues, its final outcome should be viewed as extremely successful and significant for the shaping of the future, modern Poland. Firstly, while the economic situation of workers improved, and some of the changes that they had fought for were maintained after the collapse of the revolution, the improvements that were made concerned not only the economy, but also the status of this social class. It became easier to establish social associations and organizations in the Russian partition zone, and in subsequent years these were to play an important role in the rebirth of Polish statehood. The teaching of Polish was allowed, and while this applied only to charter schools, previously it had been totally forbidden. Importantly, censorship was loosened, albeit to an extent. Moreover, as Piskała emphasizes, for the first time in the Kingdom of Poland new means of propaganda – the press, leaflets, brochures and printed appeals – were tested on such a scale. Finally, it was the first such powerful uprising of the working class, which fought both to improve its own lot and counteract tsarist oppression.[6] To sum up, the assessment of the Łódź Revolution of 1905 is closely connected with the ideological beliefs and sympathies of the authors of individual statements. The collaborators of the left-wing journal *Krytyka Polityczna*– highly influential in Poland at that time – saw the Revolution of 1905 as a foretaste of modernity, a sign of the awakening of the political aspirations of the working classes, and also as an introduction to the gradual formation of the future political scene with

4 S. Martynowski, *Łódź w ogniu,* author's own edition, Łódź, 1931, p. 22.
5 Ibidem, p. 68.
6 K. Piskała, op. cit., pp. 39–42.

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its leading players. Whereas for those who supported the right wing nationalist concepts of Roman Dmowski, the whole event was nothing more than a manifestation of social anarchy, an attack on the sacredness of private property, and the moment of formation of the Socialist workers' movement, which according to the nationalists had to be effectively limited or even completely suppressed. As Wiktor Marzec observed, in Łódź the class and national struggle overlapped each other to an extent not seen elsewhere in the Kingdom of Poland. The city, almost devoid of intelligentsia and yet sporting an unparalleled degree of cultural diversity, made it impossible to create a unified nationalist movement and a strong, homogeneous national identity. But it was in such conditions that, according to Marzec, "mass politics" were born, stimulating an unprecedented number of people to participate in social and political processes.[7] The experience was both dynamic and violent, and the price paid by the inhabitants of Łódź was high.

Prison: The Tsar, the Governor, the Chief Warden, and the Executioner

The birth of the new industrial society was accompanied by the appearance of new institutions that were disciplinary in nature, including various police departments, hospitals, schools, health departments, factories, and modern prisons. This change in the very organization of authority also brought with it a reflection on how to effectively manage society. Furthermore, literature devoted to city planning and architectural solutions slowly gained traction. As Marzec explained it:

> In the 18th century we can observe the development of a reflection on architecture that pursues the goals and techniques of society management. We are starting to see a certain kind of literature that is concerned with the matter of what the social order should be and what cities should look like, which outlines the requirements that are to be satisfied to ensure the maintenance of law and order, and which gives instruction on how to avoid epidemics and riots, how to maintain the decency and morality of family life, and so forth.[8]

Maintaining order and discipline became the main goal and the guarantee of the efficient functioning of modern cities. Factories, schools, prisons, barracks and hospitals were tasked with controlling the bodies of workers, soldiers, students, and the sick and healthy members of the population. In the total project of modernity, it became more and more difficult to make the subject independent of disciplinary practices and supervision. The usefulness of such institutions increased in times of social tension. The jail at Długa Street (present-day Gdańska Street), established in 1885 on the basis of a decision of bythe Łódź Municipal Council, played an important role in local history. From the very beginning of its existence it was the place of detention for members of the Proletariat workers' party; their numbers grew rapidly. A year later, the tsarist authorities renamed the existing court jail a prison. Conditions there were harsh: the prison was

7 W. Marzec, op. cit., p. 93.

8 M. Foucault, "Space, Knowledge and Power," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. F. Rabinow, Penthon Books, New York, 1984, p. 239.

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overcrowded, the building lacked sufficient lighting and was systematically underheated, water was lacking, while the food was of mediocre quality. With such poor sanitary and nutritional conditions, infectious diseases spread, even leading to the outbreak of an epidemic in 1892.[9] The prison became home to rebellious workers, political militiamen, members of the Polish Socialist Party, as well as ordinary criminals. In 1900, the future Polish Chief of State, Józef Piłsudski, was incarcerated there together with his wife. Recalling his two-month period of detention at Długa Street, he wrote:

> The Łódź prison, in which I spent two months and from whence I was transferred to the Citadel, was for me a veritable torment (…) It reminded me of the worst Siberian prison. Revolting food, on which the Chief Warden was probably making a fortune, and a tiny cell without even a piece of furniture, in which it was forbidden to smoke tobacco – all this made me loath the disgusting hole.[10]

Institutional violence always has its hierarchy, starting with those who express their will and formulate orders, and ending with the executors of these orders. Along the way, the instructions pass through intermediate administrative levels, for example governors, judges of military courts, or chief wardens of prisons, before finally reaching the last element in the chain of violence, namely the immediate executants of sentences. At the very top is the ruler, in this case Tsar Nicholas II, who showed a far-reaching lack of political imagination when faced with the Revolution of 1905. Shortly after his coronation, he made clear his beliefs as to how he intended to exercise rule in the empire, declaring: "By sacrificing all my energy for the good of the nation, I will uphold the principle of autocracy as firmly and steadfastly as my unforgettable parent did."[11] Despite this assurance, the state underwent a gradual process of liberalization, contrary to the will of Nicholas II, who, under the pressure of the events of 1905, was forced to make some concessions and embark upon reforms.[12] However, the process of change proceeded too slowly to stop the revolutionary upheaval. That is why Edward Czapiewski writes about the determinism of the revolutionary process in Russia, since any evolution of the system was impossible and blocked by reactionary forces for too long.[13] The tsar's faith in the loyalty of the common people and in divine providence, which watched over the ruler of the empire, eventually brought him and his family to a tragic end. When the revolution broke out, the Russian ruler accepted the policy of a solution based on force, among other, by signing a decree forthe establishment of special military courts. "When (…) on 4 May 1907 twenty-one workers were shot and killed in one of the factories in Łódź, and eighteen others injured, Nicholas did not fail to express his enthusiasm, adding the fol-

9 M. Głowacka, M. Lechowicz, *Więzienie przy Długiej (Gdańskiej) 1885–1953,* Muzeum Tradycji Niepodległościowych w Łodzi, Łódź, 2009, pp. 8–13.

10 J. Piłsudski, *Józef Piłsudski o sobie. Z pism, przemówień i rozkazów komendanta,* collected by Z. Zygmuntowicz, Warszawa–Lwów, 1929, p. 38.

11 L. Bazylow, *Dzieje Rosji 1801–1919,* Warszawa, 1970, p. 442.

12 W. Materski, *Od cara do "cara,"* PAN, Warszawa, 2017, p. 44.

13 E. Czapiewski, *Próba reinterpretacji przyczyn wybuchu rewolucji,* in *Rewolucja 1905–1907 w Królestwie Polskim i w Rosji,* Wydawnictwo Akademii Świętokrzyskiej, Kielce, 2005, pp. 15–17.

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lowing note to the report with which he was presented: <<This is the only way to unteach this crowd>>."[14] In fact, the suppression of the 1905 Revolution prolonged the rule of the Romanov dynasty only temporarily, while the reign of the last tsar – just like those of his forefathers before him – was ultimately not based on dialogue, democratization and reform, but on violence and disregard for the voice of society. Tsarist justice in this period of change found a worthy representative in General Nikolai Kaznakoff, who in the years 1907–1909 served as the Provisional Governor General of the Kalisz Governorate, Łódź, and the districts of Łódź and Łask. When it came to imposing order through terror, Kaznakoff turned out to be a cruel and effective executor of the tsarist will. During the period of his authority over the governorate, the number of deportation sentences rose, hundreds of prisoners were subjected to torture, while the Łódź Interim Court Martial gained the a reputation for beingthe bloodiest in the Kingdom. According to anaccount by Feliks Kon, Kaznakoff's personal interventions resulted in the passage of extremely ruthless sentences, including death.[15] These penalties, which began in 1904, were carried out in the prison yardby Chief Warden Aleksander Modzelewski, who went on to change his name to Aleksandr Dmitrievich Modelevskiy in order to conceal his Polish origins.[16] The chief warden had his own methods of management, which were presented in his memoirs by a member of the General Jewish Labour Bund, one Noj Giter Granatsztajn. Describing his incarceration at the prison in 1906, he drew attention to one particularly aggravating aspect of Modzelewski's governance of the facility: the provocation of conflicts between criminal and political prisoners, a widely known practice at other tsarist penitentiaries and later applied on a large scale by the Soviets. The purpose was always to terrorize the latter group, making their imprisonment as terribleas possible. Granatsztajn recalled another of the functionary's favourite techniques:

> Chief Warden Modzelewski, in addition to fulfilling his immediate duties, engaged in spying on and persuading prisoners to give up their companions, in which he often succeeded. He picked on me all the time (…), but since he was completely unable to intimidate me, he kept me without visits for a full eleven months, not allowing anyone to come to me.[17]

It is easy to surmise what the prison situation was like when the revolution broke out and the number of inmates increased, with the planned maximum number of prisoners – 70 – swelling to 200. The gallows standing in the prison courtyardwas built on the initiative of Governor Kaznakoff in 1907. Both the size and location of this tool of execution were planned in such a way as to ensure that it was visible above the prison wall, which may be interpreted as an attempt of sorts to return to public hangings. During

14 L. Piątkowski, *Mikołaj II wobec wydarzeń rewolucyjnych 1905–1907,* in *Dziedzictwo Rewolucji 1905–1907,* eds A. Żarnowska, A. Kołodziejczyk, A. Stawarz, P. Tusiński, 2007, Warszawa–Radom, p. 185.

15 M. Głowacka, M. Lechowicz, op. cit., p. 14.

16 K. R. Kowlaczyński, *Łódź 1905. Kulisy Rewolucji,* Dom Wydawniczy Księży Młyn, 2018, p. 22.

17 N. G. Granatsztajn, *Barykady i katorga. Wspomnienia anarchisty,* Oficyna Wydawnicza Bractwa "Trójka," Poznań, 2015, p. 36.

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