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## Between paralysis, crisis and renewal: The effects of the war on the polyhedral industrial city of Łódź (1914–1918)

**Abstract:** The text focuses on the impact of the Great War on the Łódź region, its economy, social conditions and demography. The uneasy coexistence between Poles, Jews and Germans living in the Łódź is illustrated as well as the cultural, administrative and ethnic changes taking place in the region under the German occupation.

The city of Łódź was the centre of the textile industry in the Kingdom of Poland, the Russian part of Poland. It was shaped by German, Jewish and Polish immigrants, who had attempted since the 1820s, to make their fortunes there. Therefore, it is equally appropriate to say or write Łódź, Lodz לודזש, or Лодзь.

By the summer of 1914, the population of Łódź had risen to over half a million; however, none knew what the Great War would mean for the city and its inhabitants<sup>1</sup>. But it was known that the city would not continue as before, if only

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1 Cf. on Łódź during the Great War: Hertz, Mieczysław: *Łódź w czasie wielkiej wojny*. Skład Główny: Księgarnia S. Seipelt: Łódź 1933; Hofmann, Andreas R.: “Die vergessene Okkupation. Łódź im Ersten Weltkrieg”. In: Löw, Andrea/ Robusch, Kerstin/ Walter, Stefanie (eds.): *Deutsche – Juden – Polen. Geschichte einer wechselvollen Beziehung im 20. Jahrhundert. Festschrift für Hubert Schneider*. Frankfurt a. M. 2004, pp. 59–78; Schuster, Frank M.: “Zwischen Paralyse, Krise und Aufbruch. Die zentralpolnische Industriestadt Łódź im Übergang 1914–1918”. In: Fejtová, Olga/ Ledvinka, Václav/ Pešek, Jiří (eds.): *Unermessliche Verluste und ihre Bewältigung: die Bevölkerung der Europäischen Großstädte und der Erste Weltkrieg/Nezměrné ztráty a jejich zvládání. Obyvatelstvo evropských velkoměst a I. světová válka*. Praha: 2015, in print; id.: “Zwischen Identitätskrise und Herausforderung: Polen, Juden, Deutsche während des Ersten Weltkrieges in der Textilmetropole Łódź”. In: Lasatowicz, Maria Katarzyna (ed.): *Der städtische Raum als kulturelle Identitätsstruktur*. Berlin 2007, pp. 95–109; Radziszewska, Krystyna/ Zawilski, Piotr (eds.): *Łódź i region łódzki w czasie I wojny światowej. Między wielką historią a codziennością*. Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi/Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego: Łódź: 2012; Daszyńska, Jolanta (ed.): *Operacja łódzka. Zapomniany fakt I wojny światowej*. Łódź 2011; Daszyńska, Jolanta (ed.): *Łódź w czasie wielkiej wojny*. Łódź 2012.

because the raw materials, especially cotton, were imported and the main market was the Russian Empire<sup>2</sup>.

As soon as 1 August 1914, Adolf Eichler (1877–1945)<sup>3</sup>, a *Łódź German*<sup>4</sup>, who worked as a corporate representative for *reichsdeutsche* firms, noted that: “anywhere [...] in the city, it was discussed whether the factories next Monday would continue operating, or should be closed, with regard to the impending shortage of coal”<sup>5</sup>. Everybody had run out of money because the banks had also closed. “The whole of Łódź was without money; the incredible was happening!”<sup>6</sup>. Public authorities, police and military prepared to leave the city; part of the civilian population would also follow them.

During the war, the population of Łódź dropped sharply by almost half, from around 630,000 to around 342,000<sup>7</sup>. The ethnic and religious composition of the population also changed<sup>8</sup>.

The small Russian population of Łódź, mostly people employed in administration, left the city in 1914. Many of the predominantly Polish factory workers, who had come into the boomtown decades earlier in hope of finding work, returned to the countryside during the war<sup>9</sup>. There was a decline in the number of immigrants, mainly from Germany, who had come to the city between 1820 and 1880 as skilled textiles workers and artisans, most of whom were from Protestant families. They had for a long time seen themselves as Łódź German and usually

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2 Cf. Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., p. 3.

3 Cf. for Eichlers biography: id.: *Deutschtum im Schatten des Ostens*. Dresden 1942. The reader should keep in mind that book was published during the Nazi period in Germany.

4 The term *Łódź German* refers to an inhabitant of Łódź, whose family had immigrated in into the city from German lands in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century. It shall be used in this text as distinct from a *Reichsdeutschen* – a citizen of the German Empire, who also lived there.

5 Eichler, Adolf: *Zwischen den Fronten. Kriegsaufzeichnungen eines Lodzger Deutschen*. Łódź 1918. p. 11.

6 Ibid. p. 8. Cf. Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., pp. 9, 24.

7 Cf. Hofmann, Andreas R.: op. cit., p. 67; Karwacki, Władysław Lech: “Włókniarze Łodzi w latach I wojny światowej 1914–1918. Łódzka Rada Delegatów Robotniczych”. In: Rosset, Edward (ed.): *Włókniarze łódzcy. Monografia*. Łódź 1966, pp. 90–102, especially: p. 93.

8 Cf. For indicative statistics of January 1918: Goerne, Antoni: “Z zakresu statystyki ludności”. In: *Informator miasta Łodzi na rok 1919*. Łódź 1919, pp. 25–37, here p. 25, table 1.

9 Cf. Karwacki, Władysław Lech: op. cit., p. 98; Eichler, Adolf: op. cit., pp. 20, 28.

had little to do with the Reich Germans. As many had since become Russian subjects, they were not interned as ‘enemy aliens,’ except for those who had kept their original citizenship<sup>10</sup>.

With the collapse of the economy and the occupation of the city by the German army, the Łódź Germans also travelled to Germany, typically for employment. Just like in other areas, the Jewish population, suspected of conspiracy with the enemy<sup>11</sup>, was to be deported to various regions of Russia<sup>12</sup>. However, those in Łódź were lucky: The planned deportation of the Jews from Łódź away from the front did not happen and so they stayed in the city. This was not entirely fortunate because most of these people had nowhere to go. They had no land to live from and were unable to work in Germany. Due to the widespread anti-Semitic prejudice, no-one wanted them there<sup>13</sup>.

As late as 1916, after the introduction of forced labour, the German occupation administration noted: “The employment of Jews still accounts for difficulties because they are seriously reluctant to go about any hard work”<sup>14</sup>. However, the majority of the Jewish population had no choice but to stay in the city, anyway<sup>15</sup>.

Only a few manufacturers, merchants and traders fled in time from the city, less out of fear of the German troops, but rather in the hope of moving their businesses to the east to continue being economically successful there<sup>16</sup>. The remaining

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10 Cf. in general: Lohr, Eric: *Nationalizing the Russian Empire. The Campaign against Enemy Aliens during World War I*. Cambridge/MA, London 2003, pp. 122–128.

11 For the reasons not only Russia’s German subjects were blamed for the Russian military failure and declared scapegoats, but the Jews, too cf. Lohr, Eric: op. cit., especially pp. 155–161, and Schuster, Frank M.: *Zwischen allen Fronten. Osteuropäische Juden während des Ersten Weltkrieges (1914–1919)*. Köln, Weimar, Wien 2004, pp. 164–168.

12 Cf. Lohr, Eric: op. cit.; id.: “The Russian Army and the Jews. Mass Deportation, Hostages, and Violence During World War I”. In: *The Russian Review* 60 (2001), pp. 404–419; Goldin, Semion: “Deportation of Jews by the Russian Military Command 1914–1915”. In: *Jews in Eastern Europe* (Spring 2000), pp. 40–73; id.: “Русское командование и евреи во время Первой мировой войны: причины формирования негативного стереотипа”. In: Будницкий Олег et al. (eds.): *Мировой кризис 1914–1920 годов и судьба восточноевропейского еврейства*. Moscow 2005, pp. 29–46 and Schuster, Frank M.: op. cit., pp. 161–233.

13 Cf. Central Archives of Historical Records (Archiwum Główne Akt Dawnych subsequently referred to as AGAD), Niemieckie władze okupacyjne na terenie byłego Królestwa Polskiego 1914–1918 (NWOTBKP), 6. p. 42.

14 AGAD, *ibid.*, 7. p. 41.

15 Ca. 5,000 Łódź Jews were deported for forced labor, and had to work in the occupied territories. Cf. Hertz, Mieczysław, *Łódzki bataljon robotniczy*. Z.A.B. 23. Łódź 1918.

16 Cf. Eichler, Adolf: op. cit., p. 67.

representatives of various ethnic groups from the Łódź ruling elite, including entrepreneurs, merchants and clerics, founded the Main Citizen Committee of City of Łódź (Główny Komitet Obywatelski miasta Łodzi) to fill the resulting power vacuum and prevent anarchy as the Russian administration left the city<sup>17</sup>.

As a result of his experience as a Łódź textile entrepreneur<sup>18</sup> Dr. Alfred Biedermann (1866–1936)<sup>19</sup> became the chairperson of the Main Citizens' Committee of the City of Łódź in 1914. Like others from his social circles, Dr. Biedermann had grown up in the multiethnic, multilingual environment of Łódź entrepreneurial families, and so was opposed to the growing nationalism of the time. For him, it was all about keeping Łódź economically and socially functional. But supplying the city was difficult. According to official statistics, already by 1 September, 1914, 135,733 citizens were unable to support themselves financially: a number that rose to over 250,000 by May 1915<sup>20</sup>.

Since this concerned, in particular, the already suspicious Jewish population, Stanisław Silberstein<sup>21</sup>, another leading industrialist of Łódź, and the Deputy Chairman of the GKO, took it upon himself to keep the Jewish community

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- 17 Cf. for the GKO: Hertz, Mieczysław, 1933, pp. 61–70; Bąkowicz, Stanisław/ Nowak, Edward, “Z problemów działalności Głównego Komitetu Obywatelskiego miasta Łodzi”. In: *Acta Universitatis Łódziensis*. Seria 1, 41 (1979), pp. 181–187; Skarżyński, Mieczysław: “Akcja pomocy społecznej w Łodzi w okresie działania Głównego Komitetu Obywatelskiego (3 VIII 1914–1 VII 1915 r.)”. In: *Rocznik Łódzki* 20 (1975), pp. 265–283, id., “Polityka niemieckich władz okupacyjnych w Łodzi w okresie działania Głównego Komitetu Obywatelskiego 6 XII 1914–1 VII 1915”. In: *Zeszyty Naukowe Politechniki Łódzkiej. Nauki Społeczno-Ekonomiczne* 4 (1977), pp. 91–106; id., *Główny Komitet Obywatelski w Łodzi i jego działalność w latach 1914–1915*. Łódź 1986; *Skład Komitetów Obywatelskich w dniu 1. Maja 1915 r.* s. l.: s. a. [Łódź: 1915], p. 1.
- 18 On image, self-image and self-understanding of the population of Łódź cf. Schuster, Frank M., “Die Stadt der vielen Kulturen – Die Stadt der ‘Łodzermenschen’: Komplexe lokale Identitäten bei den Bewohnern der Industriestadt Łódź 1820–1939/1945”. In: Lewandowska-Tomaszczyk, Barbara/ Pulaczewska, Hanna (eds.): *Intercultural Europe. Arenas of Difference, Communication and Mediation*. Stuttgart 2010. pp. 33–60.
- 19 Cf. on the Biedermann family: State Archive in Łódź (Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi subsequently referred to as APŁ), Archiwum rodziny Biedermannów (subsequently referred to as ARB), 1 and 3; Wanda Kuźko: *Biedermannowie. Dzieje rodziny i fortuny 1730–1945*. Łódź: 2000; ead. “Metamorfozy: image trzech pokoleń Biedermannów”. In: Kołodziejczyk, Ryszard (ed.): *Image przedsiębiorcy gospodarczego w Polsce w XIX i XX wieku*. Warszawa: 1993, pp. 131–150.
- 20 Cf. Nowy Kurier Łódzki, 1.9.1914 and 22.5.1915; Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., p. 9f.
- 21 Cf. Kempa, Andrzej/ Szukalak, Marek: *Żydzi dawnej Łodzi. Słownik biograficzny. Żydów Łódzkich oraz z Łodzią związanych*. Vol. 1. Łódź 2001. pp. 142–243.

factional<sup>22</sup>. The former Jewish community board, the *Dozór Bóźniczy*<sup>23</sup>, had left Łódź with the city administration. The community was therefore leaderless. In this situation, Silberstein organized together with the Łódź Chief Rabbi, Leib Lejszar Trajzman (1862–1920)<sup>24</sup>, the election of an interim Board in November 1914<sup>25</sup>. Among the respected community members elected were orthodox representatives of various factions: Chasidim and Midnagdim were represented together with liberal reformers, Maskilim<sup>26</sup>, but Zionists and Socialists were missing<sup>27</sup>. Therefore, unlike in other cities, the Jewish community in Łódź resumed its activity relatively quickly and was able to face most urgent problems, such as social welfare and public security. Impoverished Jews could again turn to the community for help with the community attempting to provide even more.

The Citizens Committee, consisting predominantly of Poles, established a militia to maintain law and order. This was urgently needed in a heavily fought-over city that was repeatedly bombarded by heavy artillery, as Anna Violet (aka Violetta) Thurstan (1879–1978), a British Red Cross nurse in the Russian service, noticed during her brief stay in Łódź:

The shelling [...] was terrific; crash, crash, over our heads the whole time. [...] The shells were bursting everywhere in the street, and civilians were being brought in to us severely wounded<sup>28</sup>.

The city was under German control on 20 to 24 August and 8 to 26 October 1914. After the re-conquest by the Russian army, spy hysteria spread throughout the city. “Denunciation blooms”<sup>29</sup>, Adolf Eichler writes in his diary and on 2 November continues: “Despite the assurance of senior officers not to allow a pogrom to happen, excesses against Jews took place<sup>30</sup>.” Nevertheless, although the occurrence of major looting and pogroms in Łódź may have been prevented by the militia,

22 Cf. Schuster, Frank M.: 2004, pp. 261–263, 265–267, 267–270, 276–277.

23 Cf. APŁ, Główny Komitet Obywatelski miasta Łodzi (subsequently referred to as GKO), 1, p. 71.

24 Cf. Kempa, Andrzej/ Szukalak, Marek: op. cit., p. 149.

25 Cf. APŁ, Łódzka Gmina Wyznaniowa Żydowska (subsequently referred to as ŁGWŻ), 418.

26 On the Jewish religious spectrum cf. Mendelsohn, Ezra: *On Modern Jewish Politics*. New York 1993, pp. 3–36.

27 Cf. APŁ, Akta miasta Łodzi (subsequently referred to as AMŁ), 1567, pp. 49–54.

28 Thurstan, Violetta: *Field Hospital and Flying Column. Being the Journal of an English Nursing Sister in Belgium and Russia*. London 1915, p. 135.

29 Eichler, Adolf: op. cit., p. 37.

30 Ibid. p. 94.

the fact that the transitional period was short may also have played a role: on 6 December, Łódź again found itself under German occupation, and this time it was for good.

With the Germans taking over, the situation for the population of Łódź changed fundamentally again. Everybody had different expectations, hopes and fears. They therefore responded differently and often hesitantly to the German conquest<sup>31</sup>. Count Bogdan von Hutten-Czapski (1851–1937), a high-ranking German official, noted that when the Germans captured Łódź, Jews were “crowded together on the streets and welcomed the incoming troops with obvious relief and joy<sup>32</sup>.” This joy was not entirely unfounded, as the Central Powers had actually promised the Jews relief from the uncultured Russians and an end to the pogroms<sup>33</sup>.

Similarly, the Russian commander in chief, the Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevič (1856–1929) tried, through a promise of autonomy, to win the Poles over to the Russian side in 1914<sup>34</sup>. Therefore, the reluctance of many Poles is understandable. The hopes set often into the German cultural nation by local Jews and Germans, would not be fulfilled in Łódź. This was largely because the Germans behaved not as liberators but as occupiers. Their interest was not to rebuild, but to rigorously exploit the war-torn country, both in terms of raw materials and food, as well as labor.

Just eight days after the conquest of the city, it was officially announced that raw materials, such as wool, fabrics, metals and leather, were to be delivered to the Germans, or otherwise be confiscated<sup>35</sup>. This led to violent protests by Łódź manufacturers and merchants against the Łódź police chief Matthias von Oppen (1873–1924), who was heading the entire civil administration of the city; however, when they achieved nothing there, they dealt directly with the Head of German administration in Poland, Governor-General Hans Hartwig von Beseler (1850–1921) in Warsaw<sup>36</sup>.

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31 Ibid. p. 130.

32 Hutten-Czapski, Bogdan Graf von, *Sechzig Jahre Politik und Gesellschaft*. 2 vols. Berlin: 1936, here vol. 2, p. 173.

33 Cf. Schuster, Frank M.: op. cit., pp. 236–239.

34 Published in: Kumaniecki, Kazimierz W. (ed.): *Odbudowa państwowości polskiej. Najważniejsze dokumenty 1912–1924*. Warszawa, Kraków 1924, p. 12.

35 Cf. APŁ, Związek Przemysłu Włókienniczego w Państwie Polskim (subsequently referred to as ZPW), 151, p. 27.

36 Cf. for instance the letters to Beseler, 25.2.1916 and September 1916. APŁ, ZPW, 151, pp. 28–30; 42–46 and Radziszewska, Krystyna: “Korespondencja Związku Przemysłowców Królestwa Polskiego z szefem zarządu Generalnego Gubernatorstwa

Unfortunately this did not help, because the German administration still confiscated metals and even dismantled whole production facilities<sup>37</sup>. They were not willing to put the Łódź spinning looms and machines back in operation to combat unemployment and hunger. Poland should no longer be economically independent<sup>38</sup>. Instead, the unemployed should report for work in Germany<sup>39</sup>.

Subsequently in late autumn 1914, a number of Łódź German entrepreneurs, including Alfred Biedermann, gave up any hope of being economically successful under German rule and left the city. The Polish merchant and trader Antoni Stamirowski (1863–1938)<sup>40</sup> thus became chair of the Citizen Committee in January 1915 and remained so until its dissolution by the German occupiers six months later.

For the Łódź upper class, the welfare of their city was the most important thing after their economic success, while their ethnic origin or religious assignment played only a minor role. This pragmatism and lack of patriotism was often met with incomprehension by Poles in Warsaw and German occupiers alike<sup>41</sup>. Both were defaming the Polish or Jewish entrepreneurs as “ruble patriots,” while the manufacturer’s loyalties lay, in my view at least, not entirely but clearly on the Russian side<sup>42</sup>.

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Warszawskiego 1915–1916. Prezentacja źródła archiwalnego”. In: Radziszewska, Krystyna/ Zawilski, Piotr (eds.): *Łódź i region łódzki w czasie I wojny światowej. Między wielką historią a codziennością*. Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi/Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego: Łódź 2012, pp. 37–48.

37 Cf. Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., pp. 187–191.

38 Cf. Basler, Werner: *Deutschlands Annexionspolitik in Polen und im Baltikum 1914–1918*. (East) Berlin 1962, p. 139.

39 Cf. Heid, Ludger: *Maloche – nicht Mildtätigkeit. Ostjüdische Arbeiter in Deutschland 1914–1923*. Hildesheim, Zürich, New York 1993, p. 363; APŁ, AMŁ 13752, p. 90f.

40 Cf. Jaskulski, Mirosław: *Władze administracyjne Łodzi do 1939 r.* Łódź 2001, pp. 99–100.

41 Cf. *Rozwój*, Nr. 189/1901. p. 3 or Althaus, Paul: *Ihr und wir*. In: *Deutsche Post* Nr. 18, 24.10.1915, p. 1, id.: *Łodzer Kriegsbüchlein*. Göttingen 1916.

42 Here I disagree with Andreas R. Hofmann, who states the Citizens Committees in Congress Poland “consisted either of Poles, who sympathized with the different political groups of the Polish national movement and were striving for national independence of their country, or of people who made no secret of their Russian imperial loyalty, which in practice was in Łódź invariably true of the members of the German or Jewish industrial bourgeoisie”. Hofmann, Andreas R.: op. cit., p. 63. Arkadiusz Stempin cannot be agreed with either since he in my opinion adopts position of the German Imperial administration in Warsaw and does not distance himself enough from their pejorative imperialist terminology. Cf. id.: *Próba “moralnego podboju” Polski przez Cesarstwo Niemieckie w latach I wojny światowej*. Warszawa 2014, pp. 428f, 447, 458.



But the Russian administration enabled them to embody, against all odds, the American myth of a career “from rags to riches”. Furthermore according to their religious understanding both the Lutheran and Jewish immigrants saw, unlike the Poles, the Russian administration as legitimate rulers and thus as God-given. With the change of power, lower middle-class Łódź Germans became ever more patriotic and some became outspoken German nationalists. People like Adolf Eichler were under the impression that “the city should be deprived of their German countenance”<sup>43</sup>.

A Protestant theologian Paul Althaus (1888–1966)<sup>44</sup>, who was a military chaplain in Łódź from 1915 to 1917, and who later became very famous, stood by the Protestants in the fight for their faith and the recognition of their Germanness. He did not even notice Poles and Jews. Officially the German occupiers did not favor any ethnic group. But until then, compared with the Polish and certainly the majority of the Jewish population, the Łódź Germans had been a privileged minority. Therefore, some of them now felt discriminated against. The growing nationalism intensified the inter-ethnic tension.

Also the conflicts among other ethnic groups intensified. According to the report of the German Field Rabbi Dr. Arthur Levy (1881–1961)<sup>45</sup>, at least in one outlet set up by the Citizens Committee to aid the poor Jews in the poor working-class neighborhood of Bałuty, they were told: “To Jews we do not sell!”<sup>46</sup>.

As regards everyday life, the coexistence between Poles, Jews and Germans was not smooth. The difficult situation was exacerbated by the fact that the German occupiers not only requisitioned goods and drastically restricted travel possibilities<sup>47</sup>, but also tried to control the trade and commerce on which most of Łódź Jewry relied for living<sup>48</sup>. As a result, the occupying power, for whom the supply of

43 Eichler, Adolf: “Das Deutschtum in Łódź”. In: *Deutsches Leben in Rußland* 3 (1925) Nr. 3/4. pp. 39–41, here p. 41.

44 Cf. Fischer, André: *Zwischen Zeugnis und Zeitgeist: Die politische Theologie von Paul Althaus in der Weimarer Republik*. Göttingen 2012; Hetzer, Tanja: “Deutsche Stunde”. *Volksgemeinschaft und Antisemitismus in der politischen Theologie bei Paul Althaus*. München: 2009.

45 Letter by Arthur Levys 5.1.1915. In APŁ, ŁGWŻ, 20. Cf. also Levys open letters published in Jewish newspapers on the Situation of the Polish Jewry for example in *Jüdische Rundschau* Nr. 2, 8.1.1915, p. 10, Nr. 6, 5.2.1915, p. 45f, Nr. 22, 28.5.1915, p. 173f.

46 Ibid. p. 1. APŁ, ŁGWŻ, 20.

47 Cf. Schuster, Frank M.: op. cit., pp. 320–328.

48 Cf. on the situation of craftsmen in Łódź see the report about their situation after 2 ½ years of war, in: Central Zionist Archives (CZA), Jerusalem, Z3 149.



the civilian population was no priority<sup>49</sup>, unintentionally fostered the black market, smuggling<sup>50</sup> and even prostitution<sup>51</sup>, despite making other efforts to fight it.

The Germans did not see, or did not want to see, that they themselves contributed to the spreading of filth and disease by requisitioning the metal of water pipes, taps and bath tubs meant for Jewish ritual baths<sup>52</sup>. Instead, they saw their anti-Semitic prejudices of dirty Jews confirmed. They complained even in official administrative reports about

[t]he population, that is not steepened in preference and understanding for the purification of body, clothing and housing, especially the Jewish part of it (Lice had been found even with rabbis!) [...] <sup>53</sup>

It was generally believed by the German officers that first, one has to treat the Jew with soap, before political and cultural measures could even be considered<sup>54</sup>.

As strange as it may sound, when considering the economic and social situation, German occupation offered many possibilities for the different ethnic groups to engage in a wide range of not only social but also cultural and even political activities. In addition to various charities and Łódź clubs, the singing and multilingual music groups began working again<sup>55</sup> and by 1915, the Łódź stages were again hosting performances<sup>56</sup>.

A Berlin actor, director, and later well-known screenwriter, Walter Wassermann (1883–1944) directed plays by Frank Wedekind, Hermann Sudermann, Gerhard Hauptmann and Arthur Schnitzler on the German stage with local actresses and actors as well as ones from Germany and the German army<sup>57</sup>. In 1916 and 1917 the renowned Polish poet Bolesław Leśmian (1877?–1937) staged among others, the plays of Oscar Wilde, Henrik Ibsen, Maksim Gorky, Nikolai Gogol in Polish,

49 Cf. APŁ AMŁ, 13720, pp. 192–198; APŁ, ŁGWŻ, 81.

50 Cf. Schuster, Frank M.: op. cit., pp. 316–320.

51 Cf. APŁ, ŁGWŻ, 45; Schuster, Frank M.: op. cit., pp. 349–356.

52 Cf. APŁ, ŁGWŻ, 127; *ibid.*, 64, p. 12.

53 AGAD, *ibid.*, 10, p. 32.

54 Cf. “Protokoll der Unterredung mit Major Simon in Warschau”, 13.2.1916, in CZA, A 15. VIII. 9c.

55 Cf. Pelowski, Alfons: *Kultura muzyczna Łodzi*. Łódź 1994.

56 Cf. *Neue Lodzer Zeitung* Nr. 192/1915. p. 2.

57 Prykowska-Michalak, Karolina: *Teatr niemiecki w Łodzi. Sceny, Wykonawcy, Repertuar (1867–1939)*. Łódź 2005. p. 112–124; ead.: “Łódzkie teatry w okresie I wojny światowej”. In: Radziszewska, Krystyna/ Zawilski, Piotr (eds.): *Łódź i region łódzki w czasie I wojny światowej: Między wielką historią a codziennością*. Archiwum Państwowe w Łodzi/ Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego: Łódź 2012, pp. 119–133.

and in 1918 even the famous Polish play ‘Wesele’ (The Wedding) by the Polish writer Stanisław Wyspiański (1869–1907)<sup>58</sup>. Morris D. Wachsman (1874–19??)<sup>59</sup>, Herman Sierocki (1880–194?)<sup>60</sup> and Jacob Adler (1855–1926)<sup>61</sup> there were three prominent Jewish artists, all natives of the city of Łódź, who presented Yiddish operettas. In addition, Abraham Goldfaden (1840–1908)<sup>62</sup> brought classic plays and the works of August Strindberg and Ibsen onto stage.

In Łódź, the cinema was even more popular than the theatre<sup>63</sup> during the war, as everyone could afford it. Despite the German censorship, the cabaret was equally popular as it offered an ironic comment on hard times. For example Julian Tuwim (1894–1953)<sup>64</sup> staged his poems or sketches in Łódź for the first time during the war<sup>65</sup>. However, not only did the generally open-minded city see the formation of the young Polish avant-garde, but also the Artist’s Association ‘yung-yidish’ with young Jewish artists like the writer Moyshe Broderzon (1890–1956)<sup>66</sup> and the painters Jankel Adler (1895–1949)<sup>67</sup> and Marek Szwarc (1892–1958)<sup>68</sup> in 1918<sup>69</sup>.

Although the time under German occupation offered several cultural possibilities, politically the German occupiers tried to stay in control. After the dissolution

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58 Cf. Kuligowska-Korzeniewska, Anna: *Scena obiecana. Teatr polski w Łodzi 1844–1918*. Łódź 1995, pp. 224–227, 242.

59 Cf. Zilbertsweig, Zalman: *Leksikon fun yidishn Teater*. Vol. 1. New York 1931, col. 660–661.

60 Cf. Zilbertsweig, Zalman: *Leksikon fun yidishn Teater*. Vol. 2. Varshe 1934, col. 1496–1497.

61 Cf. Adler, Jacob: *A Life on the Stage. A Memoir*. Ed. by Lulla Rosenfeld. New York 1999; Rosenfeld, Lulla: *Bright star of exile. Jacob Adler and the Yiddish theatre*. New York 1977.

62 Cf. Sandrow, Nahma: *Vagabond Stars: A World History of Yiddish Theater*. Syracuse/ NY 1995, pp. 40–69.

63 Cf. Krajewska, Hanna: *Życie filmowe Łodzi w latach 1896–1939*. Warszawa, Łódź 1992; Biskupski, Łukasz: *Miasto Atrakcji. Narodziny kultury masowej na przełomie XIX i XX wieku. Kino w systemie rozrywkowym Łodzi*. Warszawa 2013.

64 Cf. Matywiecki, Piotr: *Twarz Tuwima*. Warszawa: 2007.

65 Cf. For instance Tuwim, Julian: *Łodzianie*. In: *Estrada* Nr. 2 1918, p. 11–20.

66 Cf. Rozier, Gilles: *Mojżesz Broderzon od Jung Idysz do Araratu*. Łódź 1999; Zilbertsweig, Zalman, 1931, col. 215–216.

67 Cf. Adler, Jankel 1895–1949. *Katalog anlässlich der Wanderausstellung 1985: Städtische Kunsthalle Düsseldorf, The Tel Aviv Museum, Muzeum Sztuki w Łodzi*. Köln 1985.

68 Cf. Kempa, Andrzej/ Szukalak, Marek: *Żydzi dawnej Łodzi. Słownik biograficzny Żydów łódzkich oraz z Łodzią związanych*. Vol. 3. Łódź 2003, pp. 123–124.

69 Cf. Malinowski, Jerzy: *Grupa “Jung Idysz” i żydowskie środowisko ‘nowej sztuki’ w Polsce, 1918–1923*. Warszawa 1987; id.: *The ‘Yung Yiddish’ (Young Yiddish) Group and Jewish Modern Art in Poland, 1918–1923*. In: *Polin* 6 (1991). pp. 223–230.

of the Citizens Committee on 1 June 1915, a city council was appointed<sup>70</sup>. Heading it until 1917 was the *reichsdeutscher* mayor Heinrich von Schoppen<sup>71</sup>, the former mayor of Gnesen (Gniezno). The Łódź German factory owner Ernst Leonhardt (1849–1917)<sup>72</sup>, who unlike other manufacturers, had already explicitly argued for the German language and culture in Łódź before the war, was appointed the deputy mayor, because the city could not completely forego the local notables. He was one of several entrepreneurs in the city council<sup>73</sup>, which consisted of twelve Łódź Germans, twelve Poles and twelve Jews, who all enjoyed a certain prestige in the city. They occupying power regarded them as suitable to take over the administration of the city<sup>74</sup>. However, the clear ethnic tripartite division would not remain for long, as some Jewish councilors joined the Polish side, while others tended to the German side<sup>75</sup>. In spite of all ideological, ethnic and cultural differences and heated debates in the council, pragmatism usually prevailed. At least until the end of the 1920s, local issues formed the primary focus of activity.

The objective of the occupying power to treat the various ethnic groups alike in the course of its policy of *divide et impera* was clearly missed, not only because a mismatch between the complex reality of occupied Poland, and the occupiers' own schematic way of thinking. According to the plans of the Governor-General in Warsaw and the German government in Berlin, there should be "no Germanization"<sup>76</sup>, and no benefits "for one or the other group of the [local] population"<sup>77</sup>.

70 Cf. *Verordnungsblatt für das General-Gouvernement Warschau*. Nr. 5 (1915). Pos. 25; "Einstweilige Geschäftsordnung für die Stadtverordneten" 14.8.1915. APL, AMŁ, 13583, pp. 31–39.

71 Cf. Podolska, Joanna/ Waingertner, Przemysław: *Prezydenci miasta Łodzi*. Łódź 2008, pp. 28–29; Jaskulski, Mirosław: op. cit., p. 100.

72 Cf. Heike, Otto: "Ernst Leonhardt 1849–1917. Ein Industrieller und Förderer des deutschen Bildungswesens in Łódź". In: Weigelt, Fritz (ed.): *Von unserer Art. Vom Leben und Wirken deutscher Menschen im Raume von Weichsel und Warthe*. Wuppertal 1963, pp. 85–88; Skrzydło, Leszek: *Rody nie tylko fabrykanckie*. Łódź 2007, pp. 23–31.

73 Cf. Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., pp. 132–133.

74 Cf. Silber, Marcos: "Ruling Practiced and Multiple Cultures. Jews, Poles and Germans during World War I". In: *Simon Dubnow Institute Yearbook V* (2006). pp. 189–208, here p. 193; Hertz, Mieczysław: op. cit., p. 120.

75 Cf. Silber, Marcos: op. cit., pp. 194–195.

76 Beseler in a letter to Reichs-Chancenlos Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg (1856–1921), 2.8.1916. Cf. Bundesarchiv/Militärarchiv (subsequently referred to as BA/MA) Freiburg, Nachlass Hans von Beseler, 12.

77 Beseler in instructions for officers and higher administration, 10.3.1916, Archiwum Państwowe w Lublinie (subsequently referred to as APL), Kaiserlich Deutsche Kreisamt Lukow, 6. Cf. also BA/MA Freiburg, *ibid.*, 54, p. 30.

Several Łódź Germans had, however, expected to be given preferential treatment by the Imperial German rulers, and were now disappointed. In 1916, an independent Polish state was proclaimed at least on paper<sup>78</sup>, and Łódź Germans such as Adolf Eichler, saw their fears confirmed. They had already been of the opinion that the German occupying power regarded them as only second-class citizens. Therefore, they had on 5 March 1916 founded the German Association for Łódź and its Region (*Deutscher Verein für Łódź und Umgebung*)<sup>79</sup>, seeking to resist such tendencies<sup>80</sup>.

In response to the proclamation of the Polish state, association representatives sent a memorandum to the German Reichs-Chancellor in December 1916<sup>81</sup>. They declared the Poles to be the “hereditary enemy of all Germanness”<sup>82</sup> and demanded the incorporation “of the momentarily adjacent parts of Russian Poland to the German Reich [that] already has a strong German population”<sup>83</sup>. However, in Łódź, the German share in the total population lay somewhere between 11% and 15%<sup>84</sup>. The memorandum neither found broad support in Łódź nor did the German government respond. In the face of such claims, Governor General Beseler in Warsaw remained reserved<sup>85</sup>, even after he saw an opportunity to create a counterweight to the more openly displayed Polish nationalism in cautious support of the association<sup>86</sup>. Its Chairman, Adolf Eichler, tried to limit the damage. After 1917, he became involved mainly in ensuring minority rights

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78 Cf. Conze, Werner: *Polnische Nation und deutsche Politik im Ersten Weltkrieg*. Köln, Graz 1958, pp. 206–226.

79 Flierl, Friedrich: ‘Der Deutsche Verein für Łódź und Umgegend. Seine Entstehung und Entwicklung. In: *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Vereins für Łódź und Umgegend*. Łódź 1917. pp. 5–30.

80 The association had in Łódź little more than 200 followers, thus has not been based on the majority of Łódź Germans. Cf. Hofmann, Andreas R.: op. cit., pp. 71–73.

81 Cf. Kulak, Zbigniew: “Memorandum of the Germans from Łódź Concerning the Annexation of Polish Territories to the Reich at the Time of World War I”. In: *Polish Western Affairs* 7/2 (1966), p. 388–403, die Denkschrift *ibid.* p. 396–403.

82 *Ibid.* p. 401.

83 *Ibid.* p. 402.

84 *Ibid.*

85 Cf. Beseler’s letter to the Chairman of the ‘Verein für das Deutschtum im Ausland’ Franz v. Reichenau (1857–1940), March 1916, BA/MA Freiburg, *ibid.*, 25.

86 Beseler’s Speech is quoted in: Eichler, Adolf: “Der Deutsche Verein im zweiten Jahr seines Bestehens”. In: *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Vereins, Hauptsitz in Łódź*. Łódź 1918. pp. 70–86, hier pp. 80–81. Cf. Protokoll der Sitzung am 3. November 1917 im Auswärtigen Amt. BA/MA Freiburg, *ibid.*, /15.

for Germans in the future Polish state. This brought him into conflict with the Protestant Church in Łódź.

Pastor Rudolf Gundlach (1850–1922)<sup>87</sup>, the head of the Łódź Protestants, who saw himself linguistically and culturally more Polish than German, was deeply rooted in the Lutheran German tradition. He therefore tried to bring about a convergence of the different ethnic, linguistic and religious groups by way of proselytizing and acculturation. He wanted to overcome the widespread notion of Protestant = German, Pole = Catholic, and so in the face of the increasingly nationalistic tones which emerged during the Great War, he demonstratively leaned towards the Polish side, especially as he feared that the German occupying power saw the Łódź Protestants as a means of Germanization. This led in 1917 to conflict with Eichler and the majority of the lay faithful present at a Synod meeting in Łódź<sup>88</sup>, because they saw Gundlach's actions as an attempt to polonize the Lutheran Church in Poland.

Despite the heated debate, in view of the changed situation in the new Polish state, the following year, Gundlach took the side of those who still held on to the German language and tradition. He argued for minority rights and protection because he was convinced that their violent polonization would lead to nothing. Everybody should be granted the same rights. Gundlach's position standing always on the side of the weak, was not dissimilar to Beseler's, who finally had to leave Warsaw on 11 November 1918 with the end of the war.

At least in Łódź, the transition of power in 1918 would take place relatively peacefully, which was the result of the negotiating skills of the Polish pharmacist and chemist Leopold Skulski (1877–1940?)<sup>89</sup>, who had been the city's elected mayor since September 1917. Although in Łódź, Polish and German socialists formed socialist "workers and soldiers councils", the Mayor succeeded in ensuring the orderly withdrawal of the German troops. He achieved control of the inhabitants of the city, so there were no riots and no violent conflict occurred between ethnic and religious groups<sup>90</sup>.

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87 Cf. Schedler, Gustav: *Eben-Ezer, eine Jahrhundertgeschichte der evangelischen St. Trinitatisgemeinde zu Łódź*. Łódź 1929, pp. 47–50.

88 Cf. *Protokoll über die Evangelisch-Augsburgische Synode am 18. und 19. Oktober 1917 in Łódź*. Łódź 1917.

89 Cf. Podolska, Joanna/ Waingertner, Przemysław: op. cit., p. 30–31; Jaskulski, Mirosław: op. cit., p. 103.

90 Cf. Bogalecki, Tadeusz: *11 listopada 1918 roku w Łodzi. Geneza, przebieg i rezultaty akcji rozbijania Niemców w Łodzi*. Łódź 1988; Karwacki, Waclaw Lech: *Walka o władzę w*

The Great War brought down the textile industry city of Łódź due to an economic crisis from which it would never fully recover in the interwar period. The measures taken by the German occupiers to economically exploit the city paralyzed it completely. Ultimately, the occupiers would solve none of the urgent problems with which they were confronted during the occupation of the city, neither the problem of food supplies, nor that of spreading diseases, nor labor and unemployment. The reasons for this failure can be seen in the conditional stereotypical views of the occupiers which led to misunderstanding of the situation in the occupied territories. Instead of seeing the causes of their problems in the way they themselves contributed to the catastrophic situation of the civilian population, many German officers, soldiers and officials maintained a general sense of cultural and moral superiority which saw just their xenophobic, anti-Slavic or anti-Semitic stereotypes confirmed. They did not see that their policy of treating all citizens alike was perceived differently by the different ethnic and religious groups. These, I believe are the main reasons for the increase in tensions within and between the various population groups. They were forced in paradoxical circumstances to become aware of their own self-understanding and had to newly position themselves in a rapidly changing world, but they knew how to use the many cultural and political opportunities. The fragile inter-ethnic balance that had long determined life in the city was not entirely lost during the war. This is probably due to the Łódź pragmatism that ultimately prevailed. Immediately after the war, local interests were, at least in Łódź, still more important than ideological positions.

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