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COMMEMORATION OF THE 1905 REVOLUTION IN THE INDUSTRIAL CITY. THE CASE OF ŁÓDŹ*

Abstract

The article discusses the current practices of commemorating the 1905 revolution in Łódź. The changes taking place in the city's memory policy are conditioned both by the loss of memory of the events from a century ago and by changing political factors in the post-transformation period. The city is a paradigmatic example of a post-industrial city in Central and Eastern Europe facing an identity crisis. Narratives formulated 'from above' compete with those created 'from below'. While the former are based on the construction of a utopian, capitalist city of success, the latter claim the history of the people of Łódź. Revitalising the memory of the Revolution of 1905 plays a key role in these negotiations, contributing to a revision of the post-transformation amnesia about the city's working-class past.

Keywords: collective memory, politics of memory, urban memory, Revolution of 1905, history of Łódź, urban social movements

I INTRODUCTION

The Revolution of 1905 was the turning point in the social and political history of the Kingdom of Poland. However, it is pretty symbolic as an example of an event that was permanently forced out of the historical memory of Poles. While historians have always been aware of its

* Some arguments included here are presented in Kamil Śmiechowski, 'Historyczne dziedzictwo a tożsamość współczesnej Łodzi. Wyzwania w procesie regeneracji miasta', in Kamil Śmiechowski (ed.) *Przeszłość, przyszłość i teraźniejszość Łodzi. Zbiór studiów z okazji 200 lat Łodzi przemysłowej*, i: *Historia i tożsamość miasta przemysłowego* (Łódź, 2022), 247–69.

importance, their attention varied depending on the specific political situation. The Revolution of 1905 was thus included in the catalogue of events of a factual nature, from which the state and its authorities derived their legitimacy, while at other times, it was almost completely eliminated from collective memory and the state's politics of memory. Editors of the special volume, published in 2007, were disappointed that after the fall of state communism in Poland, the Revolution of 1905 became completely marginalised in the historiography and common opinion.¹ Fifteen years later, the situation seems to be very different and a significant, recent increase in interest in the revolutionary events of the early twentieth century is easy to notice among researchers, progressive artists and leftists political activists. This failed proletarian revolt became an important point of reference in searching for a people's history of Poland or simply questioning the mainstream Polish historical narrative.²

In the context of Łódź, the historical significance of the Revolution of 1905 is special because it is impossible to reliably describe the history of this city without referring to those early twentieth-century events. For this reason, commemorating the revolution in this post-industrial city deserves critical reflection. Urban memory characterises the city as a physical landscape and a collection of objects and practices.³ The contemporary practices of local government, local activists and local cultural institutions (especially museums), rather than fixed memory structures, are also of interest to me in this case study. Michael Bernhard and Jan Kulik argue that "the radical regime change, such as that experienced in Eastern Europe in 1989, is not only about the reconfiguration of economic interests, redistribution of political power, and reordering of social relations. It is also about the reformulation of collective identities and the introduction or reinvigoration of the principles of legitimising power. These two tasks cannot be realised without re-examining the groups' past –

¹ Anna Żarnowska et al. (eds), *Dziedzictwo rewolucji 1905–1907* (Warszawa–Radom, 2007).

² Piotr Tadeusz Kwiatkowski, 'Pamięć rewolucji 1905 roku po upadku PRL. Wykluczenie z narodowej tradycji i próby nowej interpretacji', *Przegląd Humanistyczny*, 2 (2017), 61–75.

³ Mark Crinson (ed.), *Urban Memory: History and Amnesia in the Modern City* (London–New York, 2005), XII.

their historical memory”.⁴ It is obvious that the politics of memory in the city space has many similarities with those at the state level. Thus, it can take on both a positive and a negative dimension. It can mean ‘strengthening the common ground’ arising from historical experience and heritage or “the forgetting and erasing from the collective memory of those figures, events and institutions that are considered inadequate to current political goals and the image of the state or too antagonising in a given society”.⁵

Kevin Loughran, Gary Alan Fine and Marcus Anthony Hunter demonstrate the critical interplay between urban change and collective memory by dividing socio-spatial transformations into three categories: ‘from above’, ‘from the middle’, and ‘from below’.⁶ In their opinion, the first two are characteristic for “city governments, developers, and gentrifiers who make different draws based on local histories. In many cases, elites reduce local history and culture to ‘texts’ by commodifying collective memories. Developers and consumers read local history and character for the stimulation of economic and cultural capital, expressed through real estate development and place-based consumption”. On the contrary, urban social movements use the ‘from below’ perspective. For them, “contestations around spatial symbols of collective memory provide an important way ... to make claims on the state and assert their political and cultural presence”.⁷ In consequence, to use the words of Mark Crinson, “never before have there been so many amenity groups, preservation societies, genealogists, museums, historians amateur and professional, conservation areas, and listed buildings. The past is everywhere, and it is nowhere”.⁸

My hypothesis is that Łódź is a city with undeniable historical experience related to the Revolution of 1905. This memory, however, was almost lost during the long twentieth century. Politically motivated

⁴ Michael Bernhard and Jan Kubik, ‘A Theory of the Politics of Memory’, in *eid.* (eds), *Twenty Years After Communism. The Politics of Memory and Commemoration* (Oxford–New York, 2014), 8.

⁵ Radosław Zenderowski and Krzysztof Cebul, ‘Polityka historyczna w zróżnicowanym społeczeństwie’, *Edukacja Międzykulturowa*, 2 (2020), 106–7.

⁶ Kevin Loughran, Gary Alan Fine, and Marcus Anthony Hunter, ‘Urban Spaces, City Cultures, and Collective Memories’, in Anna-Lisa Tota and Trever Hagen (eds), *Routledge International Handbook of Memory Studies* (London–New York, 2016), 193–4.

⁷ Loughran, Fine, and Hunter, ‘Urban Spaces’, 201.

⁸ Crinson (ed.), *Urban Memory*, XI.

changes in the paradigms that took place during this period impacted individual social actors' perception of the revolution. After the fall of communism, the Revolution of 1905 was almost excluded from the official narrative about the history of the industrial city. However, in recent years, practices of its commemoration 'from below' played an important role in the emergence of local social movements and groups of activists. Today, the situation tends towards polyphony, in which both the vision of a 'city of industrialists' and the 'city of revolution' search for their own space in the public sphere of the post-industrial city. I intend to analyse contemporary practices of its commemoration, organised by the local authorities and civil society. Before going into the analysis, however, I owe the readers an introduction to the context in which the memory of the Revolution of 1905 in Łódź functioned up to the present day.

II

REVOLUTION AS A HISTORICAL EXPERIENCE

Łódź flourished in the nineteenth century as a vast textile industry centre. When the government of Congress Poland decided to establish a colony for weavers in the 1820s, it was a small village. But at the turn of the twentieth century, Łódź, with its suburbs, had more than 300,000 inhabitants and became the second largest city in Polish lands. As the fifth largest urban area in tsarist Russia, Łódź was also the most significant example of the rapid industrialisation and urbanisation in Central and Eastern Europe. So, it was the place where modern social phenomena were much more distinctly visible than anywhere else in the region.⁹ As seven out of ten people living in Łódź were workers or members of their families, the city was an obvious area of class conflict, which was sharpened due to both ethnic (economic domination of the German community and Jewish Diaspora) and gender (sexual abuse in factories, very low wages paid to female workers) reasons. During the revolution, the city became something like a 'social laboratory' with massive events occurring within the city space.¹⁰

⁹ Agata Zysiak et al., *From Cotton and Smoke: Łódź – Industrial City and Discourses of Asynchronous Modernity 1897–1994* (Łódź–Kraków, 2018), 19–20, 37–44, 257–63.

¹⁰ See Paweł Samuś, *Wasza kartka wyborcza jest silniejsza niż karabin, niż armata... Z dziejów kultury politycznej na ziemiach polskich pod zaborami* (Łódź, 2013), 197–244.

This was especially the case with the most bloody of them, the so-called June Insurrection of 1905, which left a huge impression on both Polish and European public opinion.¹¹ It was characterised by demonstrations, political meetings, banditry, strikes and lockouts, but also courses for illiterates, meetings of associations and cultural activities – a huge array of experiences that people living in Łódź between 1905 and 1907 had to cope with.¹²

For workers who experienced the Revolution of 1905 in Łódź, this was a time of accelerated political education and the emergence of a proletarian identity. However, the experience of revolution in Łódź can also be interpreted as the final stage of the city's emergence. In the last decades of the nineteenth century, the so-called 'Polish Manchester' was developing very quickly, but progress in public and cultural life was much slower than what was needed. Journalist Stefan Gorski wrote in 1904 that Łódź was "the city without a culture", "the land of plutocracy".¹³ Opinions like that were quite common before 1905, despite the significant development of the press and local public life. However, the revolution enabled the community of Łódź to establish many associations, private schools, legal trade unions and many other institutions that shape the modern public sphere. It was also a turning point for the local intelligentsia, for whom it was now possible to impact public life, which had been very limited due to the oppressive political system.¹⁴ So, from the very beginning, the Revolution of 1905 was interpreted and remembered in different ways, depending on the individual identities of social actors.

These differences are clearly visible in the memories of people who lived in Łódź at that time. For liberal lawyer Aleksander Mogilnicki, the most significant achievements of the revolution were the reforms in tsarist Russia:

¹¹ See Przemysław Piotr Damski, 'Wydarzenia rewolucyjne w Łodzi w 1905 roku w świetle amerykańskiej prasy i korespondencji dyplomatycznej', in Joanna Żelazko (ed.), *Łódzkie drogi do niepodległości 1905–1918* (Warszawa–Łódź, 2020), 11–26.

¹² See Kamil Śmiechowski, 'The Pattern of an Urban Revolution: The Case of the Kingdom of Poland at the Time of the 1905 Revolution', *Střed*, 2 (2021), 9–32.

¹³ Stefan Gorski, *Łódź społeczna: Obrazki i szkice publicystyczne* (Warszawa, 1904).

¹⁴ See Marzena Iwańska, 'Inteligencja i rewolucja w Łodzi w latach 1905–1907', *Studia z Historii Społeczno-Gospodarczej XIX i XX Wieku*, xv (2015), 65–98.

the regime was greatly depressed and the government, wishing to calm the turbulent masses, had to, albeit very reluctantly, agree to certain reforms. Slight appeasements were also obtained in Poland, in particular, where it was allowed to establish private schools with Polish as the language of instruction. ... Łódź quickly benefited from these reliefs.¹⁵

Curiously, appreciation for the possibility of legal action went hand in hand with the reluctance of this intellectual towards the revolution as such. Mogilnicki considered the June Insurrection of 1905 an 'excess', resulting from a provocation by the tsarist police. The political and economic goals of the revolution were separate spheres for him: many of the left-wing leaders, Mogilnicki argued, had an interest in maintaining discontent among the masses of the working class".¹⁶ Elsewhere, he divided the revolution into a fair political phase, culminating in the announcement of the October Manifesto, and an unjust economic phase, only leading to anarchy: "political strikes lost their *raison d'être*, but the swaying of the masses could not be stopped. Constant strikes broke out in various factories with only an economic basis. According to the factory owners, the demands became unacceptable".¹⁷

However, Aleksy Rzewski, a socialist from a working-class family, recalled that time quite differently. In his opinion:

after the massive general strike that broke out throughout the tsarist state in 1905 and led to the partial surrender of Nicholas II, the proletariat of Łódź shook. Trade unions sprouted up like mushrooms after rain, and in February 1906, the Polish Socialist Party [Polska Partia Socjalistyczna, PPS] had 22,000 members. Some invigorating breeze touched the hitherto passive masses and was discharged in the form of a revolutionary outburst. In July 1905, the proletariat of Łódź passed a bloody course of mass barricade struggle, and in the heat of the heavy battle with tsarism, we encountered symptoms of self-sacrifice and sacrifice that we could compare perhaps only to the martyrdom of the first Christians.¹⁸

The differing opinions of Mogilnicki and Rzewski correspond to two narratives around which the memory of the Revolution of 1905 was formed. The first was the marginalising of the significance of the revolution,

¹⁵ Aleksander Mogilnicki, *Wspomnienia* (Warszawa, 2008), 88.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 96.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁸ Aleksy Rzewski, *W walce z trójzaborcami o Polskę niepodległą. Wspomnienia* (Łódź, 1931), 52.

which was considered a “historical scandal”, as Grzegorz Krzywiec pointed out when he analysed the right-wing approach to these events.¹⁹ The June Insurrection was remembered because of the tsarist regime’s brutality rather than the proletarian fighters’ heroism. What is interesting is that in the case of Mogilnicki, the very negative opinion about the revolution caused him to remember this event apart from the positive consequences for the city. In his memoir, the progress in creating institutions that shaped social life in the city after 1905 was reduced to a political concession of the tsarist regime rather than the achievement of a goal by the striking workers, who were considered passive and led by the socialists. Consequently, the social and political aspects of the revolution were perceived separately, while in reality, the revolution had a dual, social and political dimension. The second approach, presented by Rzewski, can be described as emphasising the insurrectionary nature of the revolution while not forgetting its proletarian social face. By this logic, the Revolution of 1905 was, among other great historical events, considered one of the crucial points in building a democratic and independent Poland.

Wiktor Marzec investigated the memories of workers who participated in the 1905–1907 events in Łódź. Although their language was characteristic of the communist party, these sources contain invaluable information about the motivations of these people. This was typical of people associated with the radical left, who definitely put social motives ahead of political ones.²⁰ For a member of the Social Democracy of the Kingdom of Poland and Lithuania [Socjaldemokracja Królestwa Polskiego i Litwy, SDKPiL], this was the time when he reached his identity: “I have seen old bakers with tears streaming down their drunken faces as they read this proclamation. So, [we were] not working cattle, not bipedal animals, but ‘comrades’, we – comrades ... I am convinced and say that this moment was very great, maybe even decisive, for us bakers to feel like

¹⁹ Grzegorz Krzywiec, ‘Z taką rewolucją musimy walczyć na noże: rewolucja 1905 z perspektywy polskiej prawicy’, in Kamil Piskała and Wiktor Marzec (eds), *Rewolucja 1905. Przewodnik “Krytyki Politycznej”* (Warszawa, 2013), 328–533.

²⁰ Wiktor Marzec, *Rising Subjects: The 1905 Revolution and the Origins of Modern Polish Politics* (Pittsburgh, PA, 2020), 201. The page references are to the Polish edition: *id.*, *Rebelia i reakcja. Rewolucja 1905 roku i plebejskie doświadczenie polityczne* (Łódź–Kraków, 2016).

people”.²¹ Thus, the memory of the revolution made it possible to build a wide variety of narratives, taking into account different sensitivities.

It is worth emphasising that the memory of the Revolution of 1905 in Łódź was vivid, despite attempts to instrumentalise it, at least until the 1960s. In the interwar period, different political groups organised their own celebrations of successive anniversaries of the revolution and created their own narratives about it. It was a time when the patriotic approach represented by Rzewski had to compete with a right-wing story that denied the importance of these events and an extreme left-wing one, emphasising the need for the further struggle between the proletariat and capitalism. The city was politically dominated by socialists, for whom the memory of the Revolution of 1905 was the obvious point of reference. Right-wing scepticism was on the back foot.

III

THE UNSTABLE HEGEMONY OF THE SOCIALIST NARRATIVE

After the tragedy of the Second World War and the Holocaust, Łódź found itself in a particular position. On the one hand, the dream of a large part of the Polish intelligentsia about the city's Polishisation came true. On the other hand, there was a profound 'exchange' of inhabitants combined with the advancement of civilisation and the development of metropolitan functions, the most significant symptom was the creation of a thriving academic centre. This meant that the continuity between industrial Łódź and modern city was largely broken. After the war, a second, brief wave of immigration from the countryside to the textile city took place, resulting in people settling there who did not feel ties with the old, multi-ethnic and capitalist Łódź. These people had yet to get to know their own city.²²

It is therefore not surprising that in the political realities of the time, attempts were made to impose a narrative that would depreciate its capitalist pedigree and confront the "new", socialistic Łódź with the old one. By this logic, the revolution from the early twentieth century was just one point in the proletarian march to state communism.

²¹ 'Wspomnienia starego robotnika 1893–1918', *Z Pola Walki*, 3 (1927). Cited after Marzec, *Rebelia i reakcja*, 155.

²² See Krzysztof Lesiakowski, *Gomułkowska rzeczywistość. Łódź w latach 1956–1970* (Łódź, 2019).

In a very interesting and comprehensive book about the condition of the city after the first decade of socialist Poland, the revolution was described in the following words:

the working class of Łódź and neighbouring cities, along with the entire Polish and Russian proletariat, waged a heroic struggle against tsarism and capitalist exploitation. The culminating moment of these struggles was the barricade fights in the streets of Łódź in June 1905. The proletariat brought the peasant masses of the Łódź region, the intelligentsia, and especially patriotic youth from secondary and elementary schools of Łódź, with it. The government and capitalists organised a lockout, which only stopped, but did not break, the heroic stance of the workers.²³

In this narrative, workers were, like in Rzewski's words, the causative subject, but the logic of the historical process limited their agency. These statements' militarised and masculinised language draws attention: "in the new Poland, this eternal soldier – the worker of Łódź became the owner of his workshop. He transformed himself from a capitalistic slave to a full citizen. Cautious of his laws and duties, he struggled to work and fight to build social justice in Poland".²⁴

The city government and the local communist party established cultural institutions and monuments in the city space which were intended to legitimise the regime.²⁵ In 1960, in the building of the former tsarist jail, the Museum of the History of the Revolutionary Movement [Muzeum Historii Ruchu Rewolucyjnego] was opened. It was the idea of Eugeniusz Ajnenkiel, the deputy mayor of Łódź, who was formerly responsible for organising a small museum dedicated to... Józef Piłsudski, opened in 1938.²⁶ This intriguing coincidence enables us to understand why the new institution – like many others after 1956 – tended to be impartial. The last sphere of intervention was the city space. One of the main streets downtown, where fights in the June Insurrection were very fierce, was named after the 1905 revolution. In 1975, in the place Rzewski called 'the Golgotha of Łódź'

²³ Roman Kaczmarek, 'Zarys historii miasta', in *Łódź w latach 1945–1960* (Łódź, 1962), 15.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Andrzej Czyżewski, *Czerwono-biało-czerwona Łódź. Lokalne wymiary polityki pamięci historycznej w PRL* (Łódź, 2021).

²⁶ Eugeniusz Ajnenkiel, *O mieszkaniu Józefa Piłsudskiego w Łodzi i pamiątki jego pracy* (Łódź, 1936).

in Zdrowie Park, where the fighters from 1905 were buried, an imposing monument was built. It was the culmination point of the 50th anniversary of the 1905 revolution and an occasion to publish many books and brochures about this event, including the excellent book by Władysław Lech Karwacki.²⁷

Meanwhile, the young generation of artists and local activists born after the Second World War started to undermine the official narrative about the history of Łódź. However, their initial efforts were not confrontational and focused on protecting the endangered material heritage of the capitalist city from the nineteenth century. In the mid-1970s, most historic buildings became legally protected for the first time. This was possible thanks to art historian Antoni Szram, who was fascinated by the contribution of former Łódź industrialists to the development of the city.²⁸ Szram advised Andrzej Wajda during the production of *Ziemia obiecana* [The Promised Land], the stunning adaptation of Władysław Stanisław Reymont's novel from 1899.²⁹ The main characters of this novel are Karol Borowiecki, Max Baum and Moryc Welt, friends who decided to open a new factory in Łódź. They are multicultural (Polish, German and Jewish) and ruthless in their march to become billionaires. Although both Reymont and Wajda paid attention to the class conflict in the nineteenth-century textile industry, for the 1970s audience, the figures of three young entrepreneurs symbolised a kind of longing for the good old days. Antoni Szram was also responsible for developing cultural institutions focused on strengthening and promoting the city's heritage and identity. In 1975, he became the first director of the newly established Museum of the History of the City of Łódź, which was housed in the former Poznański palace, one of the most iconic symbols of the industrial glory of the city at the turn of the twentieth century. Important changes in the historical consciousness of the inhabitants of Łódź were slow but relentless.

²⁷ Władysław Lech Karwacki, *Łódź w latach rewolucji 1905–1907* (Łódź, 1975).

²⁸ See Antoni Szram, *Inicjatywy budowlane I.K. Poznańskiego jako wyraz mecenatu artystycznego łódzkiego przemysłowca* (Łódź, 1998).

²⁹ Natalia Fuhr, 'Łódź als "multimedialer" und transnationaler Erinnerungsort', in Joanna Godlewicz-Adamiec and Dominika Wyrzykiewicz (eds), *Pamięć – dyskurs – tożsamość. Rozważania interdyscyplinarne* (Warszawa, 2018), 190–202.

IV TROUBLES WITH ŁÓDŹ MEMORY AFTER 1989

In the 1990s and the first decades of the twenty-first century, the city government of Łódź strongly emphasised the city's material heritage and multinational past as the basis for local identity. This strategy corresponded to the trends prevailing throughout the country. Before and after Poland's accession to the European Union, local governments used the multicultural heritage of their cities as a form of marketing.³⁰ Also, in Łódź, its uniqueness and originality were used to strengthen its urban identity, ultimately leading to the revitalisation of the city centre. An important element of this process was, for example, the Festival of Dialogue of Four Cultures, an attempt to transform the city's multiculturalism, one of the primary sources of conflict with the dominant Polish historical narrative, into capital serving to promote the city.³¹ All of these actions happened in the face of the 'industrial' trend, and Łódź itself began to aspire to the name of 'city of revitalisation'. After the collapse of the textile industry, the city's renewal became official city policy. An important contribution to the process of appreciation for the cultural heritage of Łódź was made by the young, middle-class generation, who equated care for heritage with creating living spaces. However, this was quite a typical experience. As Paweł Kubicki argues, "Polish urban movements predominated by the well-educated urban middle class were focused mostly on cultural issues, such as: identity and the city's heritage, the aesthetic of the city and spatial planning. Therefore, the first stage of their formation could be described as a process of *inventing urbanity*".³²

After 1989, the reputation of being a 'red city' began to cause both image and ideological problems, which incidentally coincided with the collapse of local industry and a wave of social problems during the era of transformation. At the same time, a kind of inflation of ideas for a new identity for post-industrial Łódź was intensifying. The efforts of city authorities were aimed at reformulating the local

³⁰ Samanta Kowalska, *Cultural Heritage in Poland – the Background, Opportunities and Dangers* (Poznań–Kalisz, 2012).

³¹ Hans-Jürgen Bömelburg, *Lodz. Geschichte einer multikulturellen Industriestadt im 20. Jahrhundert* (Paderborn, 2022), 431–40.

³² Paweł Kubicki, 'Inventing Urbanity: Urban Movements in Poland', *Society Register*, 4 (2020), 91.

identity. However, most of the ideas from the 1990s were slogans rather than a more comprehensive urban renewal program. According to the reporter Wojciech Górecki, “no one had a big idea for Łódź, which in the nineteenth century was the Polish Manchester and in the forty-five years after the war, was a city of textile workers. There was no such big idea until today. ... The slogan ‘Promised Land’ is again a misunderstanding – nothing will restore the multicultural Łódź described by Reymont; one must, without forgetting its roots, invent Łódź anew”.³³

However, when people who were contesting the local politics of memory during the communist era came to power in the city, the narrative based on the history of the proletariat, which was in force during the communist period, suddenly found itself in retreat and was replaced with a new story imposed ‘from above’. This was the imagined vision of the city of the enlightened industrialists, which ignored the historical experience of the ordinary inhabitants of Łódź, especially those who did not remember the pre-war city. Thus, it can be argued that the commemoration of multicultural Łódź, which existed before the Second World War, after 1989 was accompanied by the policy of suppressing everything that constituted the social image of the city after 1945 from collective memory.³⁴ It is striking how quickly, in the local discourse, individual factories lost their names from the communist period, and buildings regained the names of their original owners. In the local public discourse, the bankrupted ‘Poltex’, ‘Uniontex’ and other textile plants gave way to Scheibler’s, Grohman’s, Poznański’s and other representatives of the industrial elites from before the Second World War. The most insolent examples of the communist regime in the city space, like Julian Marchlewski’s monument, were dismantled. Also, some significant institutional changes were made. For instance, in 1990, the Museum of the History of the Revolutionary Movement was transformed into the Museum of Independence Traditions, dedicated to teaching national history rather than local history. Local television produced the documentary titled *Rody fabrykanckie* [Factory Families], where the families of former Łódź

³³ Wojciech Górecki, *Łódź przeżyła katharsis* (Łódź, 1998), 10.

³⁴ Joanna Michlic, ‘Łódź in the Post-Communist Era: In Search of a New Identity’, in John Czaplicka, Nida Gelasis, and Blair Ruble (eds), *Post-Communist Cities: New Cultural Reorientations and Identities* (Washington DC, 2008), 281–304.

entrepreneurs were presented as local aristocracy.³⁵ Also, the local university supported this transformation and started researching the history of the multicultural city and its former industrial elites.³⁶

Sometimes, attempts to rewrite the history of Łódź in such a way that would fit the new reality were quite dramatic. Some of them, however, were almost ridiculous. It is significant that Marek Janiak, an architect and visual artist who had considerable merits in fighting to protect Łódź's architectural heritage, merged it with a kind of cult of capitalism. In 2005, as the leader of the influential Piotrkowska Street Foundation, he organised a conference about local identity. During the conference, the attendees postulated that references to the working-class ethos of Łódź should be replaced with the concepts of the bourgeois, factory, and that the city of workers should become the city of students and artists. After the meeting, Janiak wrote a kind of manifesto, where serious care about the material heritage of the city, threatened with destruction, went hand in hand with anti-proletarian and anti-socialist prejudices: "A Łódź of the Capitalists, the Bourgeoisie and the Bankers sounds proud. However, for 45 years everyone was told that Łódź was a working class city. But a worker is not a category that can be the target of ambition and pride".³⁷ In Janiak's opinion, "in its propaganda, socialism made the gibbering about workers' martyrdom by capitalists absurd". Moreover, the workers of Łódź should be grateful to the factory owners for their status:

we have to remember that workers were often illiterates from the countryside. In general, Łódź gave them a chance for cultural advancement and participation in creating a new face of humanity. They co-created the age of steam and then electricity. This chance was given to them by the capitalists. Anyway, to those with the talent and courage to start their own business and turn from a worker into an entrepreneur.³⁸

³⁵ *Rody fabrykanckie*, documentary (Telewizja Polska, 1994), <https://filmpolski.pl/fp/index.php?film=4213116>.

³⁶ Stefan Pytlas, *Łódzka burżuazja przemysłowa w latach 1864–1914* (Łódź, 1994); Marek Koter et al., *Wpływ wielonarodowego dziedzictwa kulturowego Łodzi na współczesne oblicze miasta* (Łódź, 2005).

³⁷ Marek Janiak, 'Zbudź w sobie Łódź. Tożsamość, co to jest i jak się odnosi do miasta, jakim jest Łódź', <http://www.piotrkowska.pl/dokumenty/artykul2.pdf> [Accessed: 15 June 2015].

³⁸ *Ibid.*

Although the vision of the factory owners' city dictated from above was triumphant, it never managed to impose itself onto the city's entire community, which was still more leftist than most of Poland. Unlike other cities, different forms of commemoration of the revolt survived in city street names and in the form of monuments and plaques.³⁹ The city government was trying to rewrite the history of the June Insurrection by including it in the canon of Polish patriotic holidays; thus, in several publications financed by the municipality, the vision of the Revolution of 1905 was similar to the one presented by Rzewski.⁴⁰ It was only a matter of time before some social actors would decide to claim this memory 'from below'.

V

THE FORGOTTEN REVOLUTION RETURNS TO FAVOUR

What happened that 25 years after the fall of communism, the Revolution of 1905 returned to favour? As Magdalena Nowicka-Franczak noted, in the second decade of the twenty-first century, two important tendencies in the Polish discourse about the post-1989 transition emerged. The first one was the readiness to conduct at least partial self-criticism of the elites with "defence of liberal democracy as an idea, through the criticism of pathology within the process of its implementation". The second was the retribution discourse, characteristic of younger authors close to urban movements or new leftist political initiatives (i.e. the 'Razem' [Together] party). "Their main discursive strategy consists in pointing out income and property inequalities generated by the neoliberal logic approved in the 1990s", as Nowicka-Franczak pointed out.⁴¹ In particular, the second trend mentioned above is relevant in the context of this article. Paweł Kubicki emphasised that "in the particular case of Polish urban movements, the crucial mechanism which transformed grassroots activity into urban movements was the rising anger and frustration at neoliberal

³⁹ Kwiatkowski, 'Pamięć rewolucji 1905', 65–7.

⁴⁰ See Tadeusz Zbigniew Bogalecki, *Łódzkie barykady wolności i godności: czerwiec 1905 roku* (Łódź, 2010).

⁴¹ Magdalena Nowicka-Franczak, 'Was Another Modernisation Possible? Liberal and Leftist Critique of the Transformation in the Public Debate in Poland', *Polish Sociological Review*, 3 (2018), 334–7, <https://doi.org/10.26412/psr203.02>.

urban policies”.⁴² Growing up in a deindustrialised city with a vast scale of social problems like unemployment or poverty led the younger generation of urban activists from Łódź to search for historical roots that could legitimise their own social commitment. As a result, urban movements that emerged in the city in the twenty-first century contested the commodification of local historical memory, unlike the old ones.

In the book published in 2013 by the Łódź branch of the ‘Krytyka Polityczna’ journal, which is a kind of guide to these somewhat forgotten events from the beginning of the twentieth century, we can read the following declaration:

what is considered by many inhabitants of Łódź as an unnecessary burden and an uncomfortable heritage (allegedly not suitable for today’s challenges), we found particularly valuable and worth rethinking. ... Nevertheless, we intuitively sensed from the very beginning that the history of Łódź is much richer than is usually believed.⁴³

In the second decade of the twenty-first century, instead of a vision of the past based on a kind of cult of successful people, namely factory owners, an alternative vision began to be propagated, in which the subjects are primarily their employees: factory workers and labourers, ordinary residents, including women, from Łódź. The exclusive historical narrative focused on the city’s material heritage: factory palaces, beautiful houses at Piotrkowska Street, and finally, idealised housing estates for workers such as Księży Młyn, was proposed to be replaced with what could be called a plebeian narrative about the past ‘Polish Manchester’.

The most significant practice of reconfiguring the local memory ‘from below’ was the idea of celebrating subsequent anniversaries of the June insurrection in the city space. Local activists identified it as an authentic collective experience that could inspire its contemporary residents. In the special anniversary edition of the *Kronika Miasta Łodzi* magazine,⁴⁴ cultural activist Błażej Filanowski noted:

⁴² Kubicki, ‘Inventing Urbanity’, 94.

⁴³ Piskała and Marzec (eds), *Rewolucja 1905*, 10.

⁴⁴ Although this volume was published by the local government of Łódź, most of the authors were academic scholars and local activists rather than city officials or politicians.

Polish Manchester, a city of factories, a promised land or a multicultural melting pot – similar phrases appear in most messages describing the city's character and creating a vision of its history. How can these associations be developed further? How should the inhabitants of Łódź be described, who they were and who they are, and whether they look at abandoned factories with sentimentality or relief? How were industrial fortunes built in the nineteenth century, and how did the socialist system use them? The problem of working through the industrial heritage of Łódź is still a current and important challenge for its inhabitants. The discussion about the Revolution of 1905 and the June insurrection has huge potential to disarm stereotypes and provoke questions about the city's future.⁴⁵

As Robert Traba pointed out, “in order to feel at home in a certain place, it is not enough to treat the existing, ‘foreign’ heritage as a temporary deposit only. The sense of leaving behind and caring for a foreign heritage is to give it contemporary, genuinely new meanings: an interactive process of building a collective identity based on a dialogue between material heritage, family memory and the changing ideas of future generations”.⁴⁶ The statements clearly demonstrate this dissonance in the interview that four participants of the celebration gave in 2016 to a journalist from *Gazeta Wyborcza*. Michał Gauza, the main organiser of the celebration, declared that “there is a huge gap in our identity. As we walked in last year's parade carrying the slogans of workers, people stopped. It turned out that these slogans were dear to them and that it was grossly up-to-date”. Przemysław Owczarek, a cultural animator and writer, argued: “I come from a working-class family that took care of my education. That is why work is a value for me, just as it was important for many generations of people from Łódź, because thanks to it we transform the world and ourselves”. He adds that “the city lacks a great narrative. And the events from 111 years ago could become the foundation of a modern European city open to others”. In turn, Paulina, a twenty-two-year-old law student, perceives her participation in the celebrations primarily as an element of civic education about the city's past. “I was born here, and thanks to what is happening around the Revolution of 1905, I feel a connection with the city”, she said. Kamil Piskała, a young

⁴⁵ Błażej Filanowski, ‘Znaczenie rewolucji 1905 roku dla współczesnej Łodzi. Klimat na rewolucje’, *Kronika Miasta Łodzi*, 3 (2015), 7.

⁴⁶ Robert Traba, ‘Dialogi pamięci. Rozważania wokół recepcji pamięci zbiorowej’, *Sensus Historiae*, 15 (2014), 120.

academic historian, demanded radical changes in the way in which history existed in the public sphere: “this is a good starting point for thinking about the future. In history classes, children primarily learn about political and military events. Social processes are missed”. In his opinion, “incorporating the 1905 revolution into the communist narrative of the past does not invalidate the event itself”.⁴⁷

VI

SEARCHING FOR THE POLYPHONIC NARRATIVE

However, the question must be asked whether, despite the considerable successes of the organisers of the annual celebrations, the events of the Revolution of 1905 in Łódź could become a founding myth on which the contemporary identity of the city would be based? The answer to this question seems to be negative. The distance between 1905 and the present day is too long and too political for commonality. It should be emphasised, however, that “urban movements in Poland have come to power not through political institutions, but thanks to the creation of a new discourse, a new narrative”.⁴⁸ Organisers of the celebrations managed to permanently embed the awareness of the importance of the Revolution of 1905 in the cultural and activist environment of Łódź. As a result, the city was forced to rethink the local politics of memory and incorporate the anniversaries of the June Insurrection into the ‘official’ history of Łódź. In 2015, the Museum of Independence Traditions organised a temporary exhibition entitled ‘The Revolution of 1905–7. On the 110th anniversary of the outbreak’. In 2021, the Museum prepared the radio play titled *Nekome* [Yid. revenge] and a temporary exhibition devoted exclusively to the June Insurrection.⁴⁹ In the introduction to the exhibit brochure,

⁴⁷ Estera Flieger, ‘Rewolucja 1905 roku. Młoda twarz rewolucji. Wciąż na barykadach’, *Gazeta Wyborcza Łódź* (16 June 2016), <https://lodz.wyborcza.pl/lodz/7,44788,20249395,rewolucja-1905-roku-mloda-twarz-rewolucji-wciaz-na-barykadach.html> [Accessed: 5 Dec. 2022].

⁴⁸ Kubicki, ‘Inventing Urbanity’, 98.

⁴⁹ What should be noted here, in the last decade small, temporary exhibitions about the Revolution of 1905 were also organised by Museum of Art [Muzeum Sztuki] in Łódź, owned by the state and voivodeship government, as well as the commercial Factory Museum [Muzeum Fabryki], which is a part of the Manufaktura shopping, leisure and culture centre, located in the former Poznański factory.

the importance of the Revolution of 1905 is presented in a polyphonic way, trying to negotiate some form of compromise between the 'from above' and 'from below' perspectives in the local politics of memory:

the revolution of 1905 was not a shameful part of Polish history, but was inscribed in the tradition of independence. ... All this does not allow events to be crowded out from 1905–7 on the margin of reflections on the Polish road to freedom. It would be wrong, however, to perceive these events only from the perspective of looking for strictly patriotic elements in them. The revolution was foremost an act of rebellion against the socio-economic situation. It was the time when circles of society, which previously were not politically active, could take the floor and manifest their pains and desires. ... The Łódź insurrection is only one short episode of the 1905 revolution but is strongly inscribed into the sequence of events that took place then. It is simultaneously a significant contribution of the inhabitants of Łódź to their native history, a contribution which cannot be condemned to oblivion.⁵⁰

It seems that local museums will become institutions in which visions of memory policy, created from above and below, will be able to meet halfway. Meeting the different expectations of municipal authorities and activists is in the interest of the managers of these institutions, who have to balance between public sponsors and the changing interests of the audience. It seems to be very similar to the process seen in the West. For instance, in America "minorities and members of the working classes clamour more and more insistently for representation in museum narratives of their communities, the institutions must move from a 'lifestyles of the rich and famous' approach to a more inclusive manner of display. At times, a museum's desire to diversify itself throws it into contradiction. Changes may threaten certain traditionally powerful groups within its community, yet local museums must appeal to the groups that support them".⁵¹

On the other hand, it should be emphasised that municipal institutions enjoy great autonomy and are able to adapt to changing conditions, while the national remembrance policy implemented in the city at the same time still clings to the traditional paradigm.

⁵⁰ Sebastian Adamkiewicz (ed.), *Nekome 1905 (Łódź, 2021)*, 7–8.

⁵¹ Amy K. Levin, 'Why Local Museums Matter', in *ead.* (ed.), *Defining Memory: Local Museums and the Construction of History in America's Changing Communities* (Lanham–New York, 2007), 13.

This is especially evidenced by the announcement of the opening of a branch of the Józef Piłsudski Museum in Łódź, which is to be devoted to a minor episode in the history of the city at the beginning of the twentieth century, when Józef Piłsudski lived there for a short time, at the end of which he was arrested.⁵² The announced reconstruction of a similar facility which existed in 1938–9, is a somewhat absurd idea, especially if the hypothetical alternative was a museum devoted to the experience of the revolution in the city. However, under the current memory politics in Poland,⁵³ there is no chance for establishing this type of state-funded institution, which means that the commemoration of the Revolution of 1905 in the following years will remain a matter of negotiation between the city authorities and its inhabitants. Affirmative visions and those a little more critical of the baggage of the city's past compete with each other, as well as different sensitivities – referring to the heritage of the Reymont's *Promised Land*, characteristic of the generation of the transformation, and more empathetic ones, trying to develop a model of the 'people's history' of the city, characteristic of the generation of engaged residents of the former 'Polish Manchester', who matured after Poland joined the European Union. The Revolution of 1905 was, is, and will be, an important component of this dispute. Depending on how the winds will blow, the revolution will be sacrificed or rejected by city government and local activists. Its rightful place in collective memory will be demanded 'from below' or imposed 'from above'.

In the opinion of Mariusz Czepczyński, "contemporary post-socialist cities ... create a multi-level, ambiguous and dynamic mosaic of meanings and forms. This landscape is the result of constant negotiations between forgetting and remembering various social groups. To a large extent, it represents the situation of local communities, struggling with things that they would like to forget and those that

⁵² Maciej Kałach, 'W Łodzi przy ul. Wschodniej 19 ma powstać muzeum Józefa Piłsudskiego. Będzie filią muzeum w Sulejówku', *Dziennik Łódzki* (11 Nov. 2021), <https://dzienniklodzki.pl/w-lodzi-przy-ul-wschodniej-19-ma-powstac-muzeum-jozefa-pilsudskiego-bedzie-filia-muzeum-w-sulejowku/ar/c1-15897545> [Accessed: 5 Dec. 2022].

⁵³ Mateusz Mazzini, 'A Three-Dimensional Model of Enlarging the Mnemonic Conflict: The Case of Poland Under Second Law and Justice Government', *Słowo*, xxxi, 1 (Spring 2018), 45–67.

should be remembered”.⁵⁴ It would be an exaggeration to give any special meaning to the experiences of Łódź related to the commemoration of the 1905 revolution. On the contrary, I believe rather that they are a paradigmatic example of the struggles with their own history in a post-industrial Central European city, dealing with the need to reform its own memory after the political transformation. What makes the case of Łódź noteworthy, however, is the reasonably successful revitalisation of the memory of the Revolution of 1905, which took place when it seemed that the vision of a capitalist city had finally triumphed and was accepted by the city’s inhabitants. In this context, the history of the dispute over street names in the newly created service district in the city centre is very interesting. After consulting with historians, the authorities of Łódź wanted them to be dedicated to the memory of the families of the owners of former factories, which at the beginning of the twentieth century formed a kind of local bourgeois aristocracy. This proposal, however, was met with considerable criticism from the inhabitants of Łódź, who demanded that more streets in the city should be devoted to groups that had been marginalised so far, women and workers and other ordinary residents of the city.⁵⁵ As a result, both streets dedicated to factory owners and streets dedicated to their employees – weavers, spinners, etc., were established in the new district. All this happened just one kilometre from 1905 Revolution Street, which was not ‘decommunised’ after 1989 and is still one of the most important streets in the city centre of Łódź.

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⁵⁴ Mariusz Czepczyński, ‘Gdańskie krajobrazy pamięci i zapomnienia: (re-)interpretacje przestrzeni miejskiej ostatnich 20 lat’, *Kultura i Edukacja*, 3 (2010), 143.

⁵⁵ Magdalena Gałczyńska, ‘Fabrykanci dzielą. Spór o nazwy ulic w Nowym Centrum Łodzi’, *Onet* (9 Aug. 2016), <https://wiadomosci.onet.pl/lodz/fabrykanci-dziela-spor-o-nazwy-ulic-w-nowym-centrum-lodzi/9j5efxk> [Accessed: 5 Dec. 2022].

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