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Łódź in the Post-communist Era: In Search of a New Identity

by

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Abstract

Unlike other Polish cities such as Gdansk, Kraków and Wrocław, Łódź is a “young city” that emerged as a modern industrial metropolis in the second half of the nineteenth century. At first under Prussian rule after the partitions of Poland, the city fell to Russia after the Treaty of Vienna (1815). In 1825, Tsar Aleksander I visited the then small town of only 1004 inhabitants to encourage industrial development. This led to the city’s golden age in the late nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth. Łódź became a mixed city of Poles, Germans, Jews, Russians and also Czechs. As a flourishing center of industry, the city became popularly known as “the Polish Manchester” or “the Promised Land.” The unique constellation of textile factories, workers’ housing and industrialist palaces and gardens built in various architectural styles still lend it character today. Industrialists of Łódź’s gilded age such as Jakub Poznanski, Karol Scheibler and Ludwik Geyer gave the city an enduring personality

The Second World War brought an abrupt end to the vibrant multicultural life in the city. After the defeat of Poland, the Germans incorporated the city into the Third Reich. Its Jewish population was confined to the infamous Łódź ghetto in the district of Bałuty, a Jewish working class district. Only a small number of the large, influential, and diverse Jewish residents of the city would survive the mass murder that ensued.

After World War II Communist Poland promoted Łódź as a modern industrial and socialist city by emphasizing the architecture of bleak shopping centers and apartment blocks such as one dubbed by the locals as “Manhattan.” The multicultural, multi-ethnic character of the city’s built heritage was ignored and forgotten. Without provenance, the once renowned factories, palaces and villas that survived WWII began to house the various institutions of the communist state. The homogeneity of the city’s postwar population of Poles also played an important role in obscuring its multi-ethnic heritage.

Since 1989 Łódź, like many cities in East Central Europe, has begun to research and discover its historical identity. Attempting to “remake” the present and future image of the city, an archeology of the local is bringing a variegated past to light. Key to this project is the idea of Łódź as a classically modern, industrial, and European city. Monuments and art works, architectural renovation, and commemorative practices such as the organization of the annual Festival of Four Cultures (2001-2004) are part of this program.

This paper considers the steps taken by the city authorities and cultural elites to revitalize the built heritage and how these steps manifest themselves in the articulation of the post-communist city space. I question the extent to which this restoration project can be realized in a city that underwent major and irreversible transformations of its local identity during the Second World War and the communist era. What does it mean to recover a built heritage that derived from the mix of four cultures, German, Jewish, Polish, and Russian, in a city that has been Polish for four decades? Can the post-1989 Łódź become once again “the new Promised Land?”

Introduction

Since the fall of Communism, Łódź, the second-largest city in Poland with 800,000 inhabitants, has embarked on a process of cultural reorientation. This process aims at reshaping it into a forward-looking, twenty-first century European city. A close look at this process reveals that the turn towards a post-communist, optimistic and European future seems heavily dependent on a return to the city's pre-communist past, to what might be called the archeological project of the rediscovery of the local pre-1939 multiethnic and multicultural heritage. This phenomenon involves two aspects: the first is the positive reinterpretation and reevaluation of the pre-1939 heritage, and the second is the actual revitalization of this heritage in the present and the future. Currently the former aspect is much more advanced than the latter. In fact there is a clear discrepancy between the level of positive reevaluation and endorsement of this heritage, and the scope of its revitalization. This is not to say that the revitalization of the multicultural heritage has not taken place, but that the major projects still exist in the form of architectural plans, rather than completed works.

This paper aims at providing a short overview of this cultural reorientation, which first began in the 1990s. It discusses the origins of this process and the various forms it is taking, from cultural discourse and cultural events, to the renovation of historical buildings and the erection of new monuments in the city. It also briefly discusses major projects of the revitalization of historical areas, such as the Old Market [*Stary Rynek*].

What are the guiding principles behind the cultural reorientation of the city? How do the city authorities and local cultural elites define the rediscovery of the pre-1939 multicultural heritage? What are the dimensions of this process? And to what extent can this project be realized in a city which underwent major and irreversible demographic transformations as a result of the Second World War and the communist era? These are some of the questions this paper seeks to address.

Łódź between the Past and the Present

In 1423 the Polish King Władysław Jagiełło (1386-1434) granted the village of Łódź the status of a town, yet Łódź does not have the famous urban history common to other major Polish cities such as Gdańsk (Danzig), Kraków, and Wrocław (Breslau).¹ Łódź was a small, underdeveloped, rural town during the First Polish Republic, and remained so under Prussian rule between the 1790s and 1815. In 1809, the year in which a small Jewish community settled in the town, the total population of the town numbered 430 individuals.² In 1810 the number of residents slightly increased, reaching 514 individuals.³

¹See Henryk Poselt, *Łódź do roku 1825. Kalendarium. Łódź*, (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Piątek Trzynastego, 2003), p. 7. Hereafter, Poselt, *Łódź do roku 1825*. Despite many popular publications there is an evident lack of scholarly books about the political, social and cultural history of Łódź.

²Ibid., p. 24.

³Ibid., p. 25.

The lack of a well-developed urban history prior to 1800 has had an impact both on the image and self-image of the city. A "historical inferiority" complex seemed to haunt the city until very recently.⁴ Łódź was for a long time perceived as an undesirable tourist destination, unlikely to be visited by Polish or foreign tourists. It was, perhaps, the only major Polish city scarcely to be noted in tourist guides to Poland.⁵ Advocates of the post-1989 cultural reorientation of the city aim at putting an end to "Łódź's complex of historical inferiority" and its reputation as an undesirable tourist destination. Their goal is to evoke, among its local population, pride in its history. In fact, generating pride in the city's pre-1939 heritage constitutes one of the main underlying principles of the ongoing project of cultural reorientation.

However, this is a complex project that involves major reassessments of the city's late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century history. Characteristically, this period was seen to constitute "the Golden Age" of this "young city," which became popularly known as the "Polish Manchester" and "the Promised Land." The first negative assessment of the industrialized city emerged at the end of the nineteenth century. The negative imagery generated during that period would receive further elaboration during the communist era of 1945 to 1989. The communists viewed the urban industrial bourgeois and their culture as antithetical to the working classes whom they championed; the multiethnic and multicultural past had no place in the communist version of the city's history and would be largely forgotten. Therefore, the post-1989 cultural reorientation of the city is based on a retelling of its history from a new perspective that affirms the bourgeois, capitalist, multiethnic and multicultural heritage. It is useful to review that heritage and its previous reception in both national and communist contexts before considering the contemporary pattern of reception.

The "Rebirth" and "the Golden Age"

Between the 1870s and 1890s Łódź experienced its "Golden Age," a direct outcome of the "the Second Birth" or "Rebirth" of the city in the first half of the nineteenth century. In the aftermath of the Treaty of Vienna (1815), Łódź fell under the Russian Empire, and this date marks the beginning of the "Second Birth" or "Rebirth" of what was then a small town. On 18 August 1820, Rajmund Rembaliński (1774-1841), Chairman of the Commission for Mazovia Province, issued a decree endorsing the development of textile industries in the town and its modernization. Rembaliński, who was also a poet and veteran of Tadeusz Kościuszko's Uprising of 1794, realized that, in order to implement the decree of 18 August 1820, the town needed an influx of entrepreneurs and businessmen with expertise in, and experience of, the textile industry.

⁴Representatives of local cultural elites stress that that low self-esteem found among residents in the city is caused by an historical inferiority complex. For example, Mr. Marian Panek, Chairman of the Restoration Plan of the Old Market in Łódź, made this comment to the author of this paper in his communication of January 2005.

⁵Foreign tourists who plan to visit the city are acutely aware of the lack of information about the city in travel books on Poland. See, for example, the comments of Christopher Phelps, "Being There," *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, 23 December 2004, p. 7, and Karol Schlögel, "W poszukiwaniu 'Ziemi Obiecanej,'" *Tygiel Kultury* 4 (1997): 10. Hereafter Schlögel, "W poszukiwaniu 'Ziemi Obiecanej.'"

Rembieliński invited newcomers from German and Czech lands to settle in Łódź and offered them tax concessions and state support to sell their goods on the vast Russian market. His efforts were strengthened by the visit to Łódź in 1825 of Tsar Aleksander I, who gave personal encouragement for the town's industrial development. The first entrepreneurs arrived in Łódź between the late 1820s and the 1850s. Berlin-born Ludwig Geyer (1805-1869) arrived from Neugersdorf in Saxony in 1826; Karol Scheibler (1820 -1888) arrived from Monschau in 1853; and Kalmanowicz Poznański, the garment merchant (1785-1856), arrived in 1834 from the small village of Kowale near Włocławek in the Kujawy region. Geyer and Scheibler were later to acquire the nicknames "the Kings of the Cotton and Linen Empires of Łódź." Recently Geyer, Scheibler and Israel Kalmonowicz Poznański (1833-1900), the son of Kalmanowicz Poznański, were officially granted the status of founding fathers of the city's textile industry.⁶ Their recognition is one of the key manifestations of the positive reevaluation of the city's capitalist and bourgeois heritage.

Between the 1850s and 1890s, Łódź underwent a rapid process of modernization. In 1864 Łódź received its first telegraphic station. In 1869 the first gas lamps appeared on the streets of the city. In 1866 Łódź acquired a railway connection on the important route between Warsaw and Vienna, and in 1898 the first electric tram was driven in Łódź.⁷ This first tram to appear on Polish territories under Russian administration gave the city a reputation for being a pioneer of modernization. In the post-1989 period the characteristic of modernity became one important aspect of the newly constructed, post-communist identity of the city.

Between the 1850s and 1890s the process of building up the textile empire would lend the city an enduring character. This empire employed one-quarter of all workers living in the area of Poland incorporated into the Russian Empire, a fact which contributed to the image of Łódź as the capital of workers and of the working-class movement. The major factories of Poznański, Geyer and Scheibler, Silberstein, Heinzl and Kunitzer employed up to 7,000 workers.⁸ The communists would selectively emphasize aspects of this working-class history and imagery, which were key to their narrative of Łódź's past.

In contrast with other cities in Poland, Łódź became one of the most rapidly growing cities in late-nineteenth-century Europe. Its population of 16,000 individuals in 1850 increased to 321,000 individuals by 1900 and reached 600,000 in 1914 on the eve of the First War World. Its speed of urbanization was comparable to that of the development of American cities during the late nineteenth century. The "rediscovery" of these patterns of growth after 1989 has led to comparisons of Łódź to New York. These comparisons not only pointed to the degree and speed at which the cities grew, they also took note of similar urban features such as the grid layout of the streets.

By the end of the nineteenth century, a rich mosaic of peoples, cultures and religions inhabited Łódź, giving it a unique character. Germans, Jews and Poles constituted the three main ethnic communities living in the city. Czech and French en-

⁶On the history of the industrialist families of Łódź, see Leszek Skrzydło, *Rody fabrykanckie* Vols. 1 and 2 (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 2000).

⁷Schlögel, "W poszukiwaniu "Ziemi Obiecanej," p. 12.

⁸Ibid., p. 12

trepreneurs and Russians, who were mostly administrators and official representatives of the Russian government, constituted smaller groups in the vibrant multicultural local society.⁹

The unique constellation of textile factories, workers' housing and industrialist palaces with gardens created in the city between the 1850s and 1890s are the key markers of Łódź's "Golden Age."¹⁰ The industrialists built palaces, houses and tombs in historicist and modern architectural styles ranging from Classical, neo-Gothic and neo-Romanesque to Art Nouveau. These monumental edifices gave the city a unique aesthetic character.¹¹

The "Golden Age" also manifested itself in the urbanization of large sections of the city on both sides of Piotrkowska Street, the Śródmieście district. First laid out in 1821, this street, four kilometers in length, would come to symbolize the strong presence of a prosperous urban bourgeoisie by the end of the nineteenth century.¹² The street offered expensive and luxurious European goods to its new "aristocracy." This nineteenth-century history of the rapid development of Piotrkowska Street epitomizes the transformation of Łódź from a small town to a modern industrial metropolis with unique architectural features and European flair.

Łódź as "The Bad City"

However, just as the city was leaving the era of the "Golden Age," negative images began to be associated with it. By the first decade of the twentieth century, it had acquired the reputation of "the bad city" (*złe miasto*), an epithet that reflected a new evaluation of its expansive capitalist, industrial, modern and urban character. This negative image crystallized in certain circles, among ethnic Polish cultural elites whose sharp criticism of the industrial metropolis was rooted in Polish Conservative and aristocratic traditions, which idealized a country lifestyle as opposed to Western capitalist and urban influences, and saw the city as a source of "social and cultural evil." In 1907 Zygmund Bartkiewicz (1867-1944), a popular Catholic journalist and writer associated with the Polish nationalistic movement National Democracy (*Endecja*), coined the term "bad city."¹³ In a series of essays, "Złe miasto," first published in the journal *Światło* that same year, he portrayed Łódź as a place of ruthless capi-

⁹For a rare and interesting account of the relationship among the various ethnic and cultural groups which lived in the city, see the essays of Henryk Vimard, a French journalist who visited Łódź in 1910. Henryk Vimard, *Łódź. Polski Manszester* (Łódź: Biblioteka Tygła, 2001 [reprint])

¹⁰On the history of entertainment in Łódź during the Golden Age, see Waclaw Pawlak, *Minionych zabaw czar czyli czas wolny i rozrywka w dawnej Łodzi*, (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 2001)

¹¹On the history of Łódź's nineteenth-century architecture, see, for example, Stephen Muthesius and Irena Poplawska, "Poland's Manchester: 19th Century Industrial and Domestic Architecture in Łódź," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* (USA), XVI (June 1986): 148-60.

¹²The first established section of Piotrkowska Street run between Plac Kościelny and Stary Rynek – the oldest part of the city. Today this section is called Pojezierska Street. See Poselt, *Łódź do roku 182*, p. 28. There is still a lack of comprehensive urban studies on Łódź.

¹³Zygmund Bartkiewicz's *Złe miasto* was published in 1911 and was reprinted in 2001 by the Biblioteka Tygiel Kultury. For information about Bartkiewicz, see the introduction by Andrzej Kempa to the reprint *Złe miasto*, (Łódź: Biblioteka Tygiel Kultury, 2001), pp. 5-11.

talist exploitation of the working class – an exploitation which generated poverty, corruption and a lack of morals among the workers. According to Bartkiewicz, this capitalist exploitation had also led to social conflicts and to an eruption of violence and death in the city.

Bartkiewicz observed at close quarters the end of the revolution of 1905-07, a revolution that had swept over major cities of the Russian Empire and had not omitted Łódź.¹⁴ By the end of 1907, 322 people had been killed and 400 injured in the city. During the events of 1905-07, the working class of Łódź constituted the largest concentration of workers in the *entire* Russian Empire. The ranks of workers were comprised largely of ethnic Poles of peasant lineage, although there was a substantial Jewish contingent as well. Jewish and German industrialists whose ancestors had been invited to Łódź in the second and third decade of the nineteenth century were the main owners of the textile factories.

Bartkiewicz viewed such wide social and economic conflicts, which erupted during the revolution of 1905-07, only through the lens of a national conflict in which rich Jews and Germans exploited poor (ethnic) Poles. His views were simplistic and rooted in anti-Jewish and anti-German prejudices. Therefore he saw the solution to the misery of the working class in the ideology of Polish organic nationalism.¹⁵ He opposed the multicultural character of the city and wished that Łódź could become a homogenous society based only on Catholic cultural traditions. As a traditional Roman Catholic, Bartkiewicz was also critical of new trends within the Polish Roman Catholic Church, such as the emergence of the Mariavite Church, founded in 1906, to promote the renewal of the spiritual life of the clergy. The popularity of the Mariavite Church, which became a denomination separate from the Catholic Church, was strong among the working and middle classes in Łódź in the last decade of the nineteenth and first decade of the twentieth century.¹⁶

The Polish Nobel Prize writer Władysław Reymont (1867-1925) portrayed late-nineteenth-century Łódź in a similar way. In his well-known novel *The Promised Land* (1899) [*Ziemia obiecana*], Reymont depicted the key founders of the city's industrialization – the *Łodzermenschen* – as “ruthless, corrupt capitalists and exploiters who possess the mentality of liars.”¹⁷ In a manner similar to Bartkiewicz, Reymont nega-

¹⁴On the responses of city's industrialists to the revolution of 1905-07, see Andreas R. Hofmann, “The Biedermanns in the 1905 Revolution: A Case Study in Entrepreneurs' Responses to Social Turmoil in Łódź,” *SEER* 82, 1 (2004): 27-49. On the history of the revolution in 1905-07, see, for example, Robert E. Blobaum, *Revolucja. Russian Poland. 1904-1907* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995).

¹⁵For a different account of the revolution of 1905-07 in Łódź, see the reports written by the left-wing Russian journalist, Iwan Timkowskij-Kostin, *Miasto proletariuszy*. These reports first appeared in Polish newspapers in 1907 and were republished by Biblioteka Tygla Kultury in 2001.

¹⁶On the history of the Mariavate Church, see Marek Budziarek, *Łódzki bedeker wyznaniowy*, (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 1998), p. 33, and Jerzy Dzieciuchowicz et al., *Rola wyznań religijnych w kształtowaniu przestrzeni miejskiej Łodzi*, (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2004), pp. 106-108. Hereafter, Dzieciuchowicz et al., *Rola wyznań*,

¹⁷Karol Borowiecki, Maks Baum and Moryc Welt are the three protagonists who represent the *Łodzermenschen* type in Reymont's *Ziemia Obiecana*. Reymont first published *Ziemia Obiecana* in parts in editions in the newspaper *Kurier Warszawski* (1897-1898). *Ziemia Obiecana* appeared as an entire volume in 1899 and was republished in the interwar and post-1945 periods. See

tively portrayed the Jewish and German characters in his novel to vent his strong ethnic and religious prejudices. Andrzej Wajda (1926-), the distinguished Polish film director, made a film based on Reymont's novel that appeared in 1975 under the same title.¹⁸ Although Wajda toned down Reymont's negative attitudes toward *Łodzermenschen* and gave perhaps slightly friendlier interpretations to some of the characters who were not of Polish ethnicity, his film did not escape the major weaknesses of Reymont's novel. The film, no doubt a close adaptation of the novel, does not project any positive images of Łódź as a multicultural and industrial metropolis. In the film, anti-Jewish and anti-German prejudices still constitute an integral part of the city's history. As in the book, the city appears to devour its inhabitants.

Łódź in the Post-1945 Socialist Era

In the communist period, officials provided Marxist interpretations of pre-1918 local history. These interpretations reinforced the negative images of the bourgeois, industrialist and capitalist past while glorifying the ethos born of the city's working-class past. This glorified history of the urban working class provided a platform from which to project the image of Łódź as a modern socialist metropolis, whose affordable clothes and other goods attracted shoppers to Łódź from all over Poland. The metropolis promoted by the communists included the modernist architecture of bleak shopping centers and apartment blocks, such as one dubbed by the locals as "Manhattan," built in the heart of once stylish Piotrkowska Street in the 1970s. Thus, cheap clothes, female weavers, factory chimneys and gray skies above the factories became key to the iconography of post-1945 socialist Łódź.

The communists succeeded in removing the multiethnic and multicultural heritage from the official histories and excluding it from public memory. History textbooks, tourist guidebooks or commemorative practices all ignored that heritage. The great majority of nineteenth-century factories, palaces and villas that had survived the Second World War intact were nationalized in the early postwar period and came to house the various institutions and organizations of the communist state. No information about their provenance – or their former founders, owners and architects – was displayed on the buildings. Preservation of historical buildings was neglected to a great extent, in spite of the fact that in the 1970s these buildings were officially recognized as part of the protected historical urban heritage. City officials, architects and urban planners often ignored the recommendations of art historians regarding greater care of the city's unique urban character. In the 1970s and in 1981, art historians held three major conferences in Łódź, on its nineteenth-century architecture and the unique character of this architecture in Poland.¹⁹

Władysław Reymont, *Ziemia Obiecana*, Vols. 2 (Warszawa: PIW, 1970). For an English translation, see *The Promised Land* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1927).

¹⁸There is no critical comparison of Reymont's book to Wajda's film *Ziemia Obiecana*. For interesting reflections on the subject, see Urszula Dzieciatkowska, "W poszukiwaniu Łódzkiej wizji," *Tygiel Kultury* 4 (1997): 18-27. For an interesting review of Wajda's film, which discusses the problem of anti-minority prejudices, see Omer Bartov, *The "Jew" in Cinema. From the Golem to Don't Touch My Holocaust*, (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005), pp. 24-27.

¹⁹Polish historians of art organized the first two conferences, which took place in 1971 and 1979. The third conference that took place in 1981 was an international scholarly event. During the latter conference scholars acknowledged the pre-1918 heritage to be an example of a

Some historical buildings were demolished in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, as new plans were implemented to expand the local transportation network. Among the buildings destroyed in the 1970s were the exceptional complex of the first weavers' houses at Piotrkowska Street Nos. 173-232, which dated back to 1825-1826. During the same period planners demolished one of the treasures of Art Nouveau architecture, the 1902 train station, *Łódź Kaliska*, and replaced it with a bleak-looking modern structure. Despite such planning, the Art Nouveau buildings at the Avenue of Tadeusz Kościuszko No. 93 and at Piotrkowska Street Nos. 156 and 164, escaped demolition.²⁰ However, as was the case with many precious historical buildings, neither their interiors nor their exteriors were renovated. Thus the material heritage of Łódź's "Golden Age" was sentenced to physical as well symbolic oblivion. The enforced homogeneity of local society post-1945 also seems to have played an important role in the process leading to the obliteration of the city's pre-1918 multiethnic and multicultural heritage. The absence of knowledge of this heritage was the direct result of the communist positive reinterpretation of the social changes in Poland caused by the Second World War and the postwar transfers of populations. The communists viewed the resultant ethnic and cultural homogeneity of postwar Poland as a desirable development. This can be interpreted as a sign of communist adherence to the legacy of organic Polish nationalism, whose exclusivist tendencies had constituted a major political, social and cultural force in Poland before 1939. In the communist era this fusion of Polish ethnic nationalism and communism reached its peak between 1968 and 1969. One of its outcomes was the antisemitic purge of 1968-1969, which did pass through Łódź. In fact the local press in the city conducted one of most extremely avid and vicious antisemitic campaigns in all of Poland.²¹

Łódź's Pre-1918 Heritage and the Process of Forging the Post-communist Identity of the City

In the 1990s local political and cultural elites began to challenge and deconstruct the negative image of pre-1918 Łódź by introducing positive reinterpretations of the pre-1918 bourgeois and the multiethnic heritage. They insisted that this heritage should constitute the central feature of the new post-communist identity of the city, and called upon local inhabitants to endorse this project accordingly. In this process, the nineteenth-century *Łodzermenschen* suddenly became positive and attractive figures whose qualities, achievements, and life visions are ones that contemporary local society should be both proud of and wish to emulate.

Endorsement of the pre-1918 local heritage as a part of the new local identity is symptomatic of a more general national reorientation that has been taking place in Poland since the fall of communism, a turn to the culture of civic nationalism. This orientation has been gaining strength in Poland, particularly since the second half of the 1990s and early 2000s. The endorsement also expresses changing attitudes toward the cultures of capitalism and the bourgeoisie, and towards a free-market econ-

unique industrial architecture in Europe. See Krzysztof Stefański, "Zagrożone dziedzictwo," *Tygiel Kultury* 1-3 (2003): 18. Hereafter Stefański, "Zagrożone dziedzictwo."

²⁰Ibid.: 18-19.

²¹On the anti-Semitic campaign of 1968-1969, see, for example, Dariusz Stola, *Kampania anty-syjonistyczna*, (Warszawa: Instytut Studiów Politycznych Polskiej Akademii Nauk, 2000), and the interview with Alina Margolis-Edelman, "Jestem nigdzie," *Tygiel Kultury* 3 (1998): 18-24.

omy. However, since the reorientation is a totally new social and cultural phenomenon, it is difficult at present to estimate its impact on the local population. At this stage there is a lack of available data about how it is affecting the transformation of Łódź into a postindustrial and bourgeois European city, and about how the city's inhabitants view this. However, some historical and demographic factors may constitute an obstacle to a swift and widespread local reorientation. The majority of the city's inhabitants have a working class background which may well make the adoption of a bourgeois ethos and heritage more difficult.

Łódź certainly lacks a strong and affluent middle class. Furthermore, the 1990s brought about a sudden and devastating decrease in textile production. Many antiquated factories, including the most important Poltex Factory (the pre-1945 factory of Izrael K. Poznański), were closed down because no funds were available to purchase new technologies and because the major importer of Łódź's textiles – the Soviet Union – declined. This resulted in a persistently high level of unemployment among the city's population, particularly among women. Unemployment reached a high of 8.4 percent in 1995 and slightly decreased to 7.9 percent in 2002.²² Thus, one can at present point out the glaring discrepancy between attempts at forging a new identity for Łódź as a city of dynamic and successful *Łodzermenschen*, and the social and economic position of the average resident of the city. One can argue that the narrowing of this discrepancy will depend on the city authority's ability to generate funds to support postindustrial development and hence the social transformation of the local population, which in turn might lead to the expansion of the local middle class, and perhaps to the recreation of a more multicultural social makeup. Only then could the privileged narrative of the bourgeois and multicultural history of the city be accepted as authentic on a wider scale.

Post-1989 positive reinterpretations of the pre-1918 past have three inter-related features. The first feature is the endorsement of the pre-1918 past as an essential part of the city's historical traditions, with the ongoing construction of the post-communist identity of the city based on the concept of the continuity of these traditions in the present. This suggests that the present is treated as "the New Zero Time," totally disconnected from the socialist past, and instead connected to the past of the "Golden Age" of the city. This also indicates the presence of an intense nostalgia and hunger for "a New Rebirth" and "a New Golden Age" for the city among Łódź's political and cultural elites.

The second feature is the emphasis on the exceptionally modern character of the pre-1918 heritage on regional and national levels. New and growing literature on old Łódź, such as tourist guidebooks and popular histories, concentrates on the special and exceptional features of the city's material historical culture.²³ The image of old Łódź as a modern city is also projected onto the present. However, this tendency to recreate the image of contemporary Łódź as the pioneer of modernization does not seem to be realistic, and sometimes even collides with the idea of the preservation of the pre-1918 heritage. For example, in the 1990s, the historical building that housed the city's philharmonic orchestra, the place where the famous pianists Artur

²²See *Uproszczony lokalny program rewitalizacji wybranych terenów śródmiejskich oraz pofabrycznych Łodzi na lata 2004-2006*, (Łódź: Konsorcjum pro-Revita, May 2005), p. 18. <http://www.prorevita.pl/>. Hereafter, *Uproszczony lokalny program rewitalizacji*,

²³See, for example, Marek Budziarek et al. *Łódź nasze miasto*, (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 2000).

Rubinstein (1887-1982) and Ignacy Paderewski (1860-1941) gave concerts in interwar Poland, was demolished. This occurred despite opposition from the city's chief conservator of monuments, who argued that the building, designed in 1886 by the well-known architect Otto Gehlig, could be renovated. The building was replaced with a new glass and steel construction, which reflected the latest trends in world architecture.²⁴ This is a good illustration of the tensions between the preservation of the urban nineteenth-century heritage and the desires of the architects to belong to the *avant garde*.

The third and final feature of positive reinterpretations of the pre-1918 past is an emphasis on the European roots of the city and on the European character of its pre-1918 heritage. The rediscovery of this heritage seems to be understood as a tool for the transformation of contemporary Łódź into a "truly" European city. For example, the city takes pride in the fact that it has joined European Cities in the Art Nouveau Network sponsored by the European Union. This gives Łódź a special status vis-à-vis other major Polish cities that lack Art Nouveau architecture.²⁵

In public speeches and interviews, local officials express positive reinterpretations of the pre-1918 heritage. These pronouncements also reveal the extent to which this heritage is treated instrumentally as a means of gaining support for ongoing social and economic transformation. For example, in an interview given in 1996 to one of the major national papers, Marek Czekalski, a former President of Łódź from 1994 to 1998, stated:

From the beginning as President I was searching for an idea on how to revitalize Łódź. Local history became the source of my inspiration. I have read a great number of books about old Łódź and have selected those elements from its history that constitute chief-markers of Łódź's identity. Local traditions are one of the best assets of the city. Present inhabitants of Łódź have inherited the memory of an urban center which developed in a rapid manner, was inclusive of people of various nationalities, and was open toward foreign capital... I think that those traditions are good for our times, since like one and a half centuries ago, we too are witnessing a major transformation.²⁶

Positive reevaluations of the multiethnic past are found in the growing number of popular and scholarly publications on the local Jewish and German heritage, which began to flourish in the 1990s.²⁷ In these publications, of varying quality, there is for the first time a visible tendency to view the multiethnic past as both local and

²⁴See Stefański, "Zagrożone dziedzictwo," p. 19.

²⁵See Joanna Podolska, "Łódź - Kobieta secesyjna," *Gazeta Wyborcza*, (Section: Miasto Łódź), 7 November 2004, <http://maista.gazeta.pl/Łódź/2029020,35136,238067.html>

²⁶Wojciech Górski's interview with President Marek Czekalski "Nieznana ziemia," *Magazyn Rzeczpospolitej* 12 (1996): 2.

²⁷See, for example, Krystyna Radziszewska and Krzysztof Woźniak, eds., *Pod jednym dachem. Niemcy oraz ich polscy i żydowscy sąsiedzi w wieku XIX i XII* (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Literackie, 2002); Andrzej Machejek, ed. *Żydzi Łódźcy* (Łódź, Wydawnictwo Hamal, 2004); Andrzej Kempa and Marek Szukalak, *Żydzi dawnej Łodzi. Słownik biograficzny Żydów Łódzkich oraz z Łodzią związanych*, Vol. 1 (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 2001); Joanna Podolska and Jacek Walicki, *Przewodnik po cmentarzu żydowskim w Łodzi* (Łódź: Oficyna Bibliofilów, 2002); and Wojciech Gorecki, *Łódź przeżyła Katharsis* (Łódź: Biblioteka Tygla Kultury, 1998).

Polish in a civic sense. A similar tendency is also visible in those sections of the official city website dedicated to the promotion of local tourism and in the local section of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, which runs special columns dedicated to the multicultural and multiethnic history of Łódź. These include "Postcards from Łódź" and "A Multicultural Map of Łódź."²⁸ Information about multicultural and multiethnic aspects of Łódź also appears in the local section of *Gazeta Wyborcza*, under rubrics such as "Nostalgic Łódź," and "Old and New Łódź."²⁹ Printing the name Łódź in the four major languages spoken in the city before 1981 – Polish, German, Yiddish and Russian – also helps conjure up this multicultural past.³⁰

Positive re-interpretations of the pre-1918 heritage also appear in slogans and credos that accompany major cultural events, such as the recently established Festival of Dialogue Between Four Cultures,³¹ an event which has taken place in Łódź at the end of September and beginning of October every year since 2001. The first Festival 2001 was promoted as an event in which history could be both relived in the present and become a part of the future:

Everything starts with dialogue. Where there is none, nothing can be built. Łódź, a town erected in the 19th century at a rate faster than New York's, sprang to life just because dialogue between four nations proved possible; just as was the dialogue between their four cultures. In my dream about a major Łódź-based Cultural Festival of a European dimension, I have reached to the past, to the dialogue between the Four Cultures. This has led to the establishment of this truly unique town on a European scale. Although located at the very heart of Poland, Łódź was a multinational place of Poles, Jews, Germans and Russians, living, working and building their "Promised Land" together. The Festival of Dialogue between Four Cultures reaches to the past to establish the link with the future; to launch a new brand of Poland, the country in which the Festival is held, and with Łódź the venue for the event.³²

In the second year 2002, the Festival organizers stressed not only the continuity of the local pre-1918 heritage in both the present and future, but also insisted that the Festival allowed for a reliving of the European dimension of the city and for its transformation into a European metropolis. As in the previous year, in the evaluation of the relationships among Poles, Jews, Germans and Russians, the organizers were careful not to mention any historical developments that might indicate any political, social, cultural or economic tensions and conflicts among the various ethnic groups. Instead, they portrayed these relationships as based on tolerance, local solidarity and unity, and as rooted in the concept of living and sharing one place. This avoidance of any challenging historical conflicts indicates the difficulty of integrating the more complicated aspects of Łódź's multicultural history into present narra-

²⁸See <http://www.uml.Łódź.pl> and <http://miasta.gazeta.pl/Łódź/>

²⁹See <http://miasta.gazeta.pl/Łódź/>

³⁰See the title page of Marek Budziarek et al. *Łódź. Miasto czterech kultur*, (Łódź: Urząd Miasta Łodzi, 2004). Hereafter Budziarek, *Łódź*

³¹For information about past and future Festivals of Dialogue Between Four Cultures, see <http://www.4kultury.pl/indexen.php/s+preamble>

³²See the statement of Witold Knychalski, Chairman of the First Festival, 27 September – 6 October 2001. <http://www.4kultury.pl/indexen.php/s+preamble>,

tives about the city's past. Similarly enthusiastic slogans of local solidarity and tolerance, backed up with carefully selected historical images, have accompanied the most recent festivals.

"The Festival of Dialogue Between Four Cultures" is organized by the Society for Dialogue Between Cultures *Łódź - Land of the Future*, Polish Television S.A. and the Municipal Office. The festival has the following credo:

Łódź, capital city of our region in the heart of Poland, is a magical city. It owes its specific character to a mix of four cultures, four nations, and many mentalities that became one. It is the only city in Europe to originate from the efforts and special qualities of its inhabitants who sought a new place to live, thus creating their own "small Motherland." Four nations built this city from the very beginning. Poles, Jews, Germans and Russians all came here as immigrants seeking a New Land. They lived next to one another and together went through periods of prosperity and tragedy. It was a melting pot of nations, customs and national characteristics. For almost two hundred years these four nations were able to find a common way of living. They learnt to be tolerant and to respect each other. The Unified Europe towards which we are now making our way took its first steps in Łódź. This spirit has been present since those old times in Łódź.³³

The introduction of a new slogan "Łódź - dobre miasto" [Łódź - the good city] expresses the desire to break away from the old negative associations with Łódź. This slogan has recently been propagated by *Tygiel Kultury* [Melting Pot], which is the main cultural monthly published in the city. Its first issue appeared in January 1996.³⁴ From its inception, *Tygiel Kultury* advocated the incorporation of the pre-1939 multicultural heritage into the present and future local identity. Zbigniew Nowak, its editor-in-chief, has devoted many special editions to the multicultural heritage of the city, the social and cultural history of Jews and Germans in Łódź, and discussions about the city's contemporary identity.³⁵ In fact *Tygiel Kultury* is the chief intellectual forum for debates about past and contemporary identities of the city. This monthly publication voices salient reflections about the responsibility of contemporary local elites to preserve the local multiethnic heritage. It also invites former inhabitants of the pre-1939 city, living in Israel, Germany and the United States, to present their points of view on past and contemporary images of Łódź, and on the preservation of local heritage. Its editors and local contributors seem to be immersed in a process of profound rediscovery of the pre-1939 past, a past in which Łódź appears to be an exciting book full of fascinating but forgotten "unknown" places and characters, to be discovered anew and integrated into contemporary representa-

³³See the statement signed by the Festival Bureau on behalf of the organizers of the Second Festival, 27 September 2002 - 6 October 2002, <http://www.4kultury.pl/indexen.php?s=f2002>

³⁴On the history and ethos of *Tygiel Kultury*, see free.ngo.pl/tygiel

³⁵See *Tygiel Kultury* issue 4-6 (2004) dedicated to the history of the Łódź ghetto and pre-1939 Jewish Łódź; issue 1-3 (2003) and 4 (1997), which contains articles on the identity of Łódź in different chronological periods; and the issue 1-3 (2002) also dedicated to a discussion of the city's identity.

tions of the city. The assumption accompanying these ideas is that the local history has to be retold from anew.

Perhaps the most visually powerful example of the integration of the multicultural past into city space is a series of cast-iron sculptures of famous former inhabitants, commissioned throughout the last decade and sited at various sites along Piotrkowska Street.³⁶ The first sculpture erected was that of Julian Tuwin (1894-1953), sitting on a bench. Tuwin, born into a Jewish family in Łódź, is one of the most creative and best-known Polish poets of the twentieth century. The sculpture was erected in the 1990s in the middle section of Piotrkowska Street No. 104, next to the City's Municipal Offices. A second sculpture, one of Artur Rubinstein, is located not far from Tuwin's. Like the poet, Rubinstein was born in Łódź. His likeness stands next the house in which he once lived. In 2002, a sculptural rendering of Łódź's famous industrialists, Izrael Kalman Poznański, Karol Scheibler and Ludwik Grohman, appeared in the lower part of Piotrkowska Street near Jaracza Street.

Another powerful, albeit impermanent, attempt to reclaim a multicultural past, which also reflects on its destruction, is a photographic installation, *Windows of Bałuty* by Paweł Herzog.³⁷ This moving work is a collage of contemporary photos of the district of Bałuty and original wartime photos of Jews working in the Bałuty section of the infamous Łódź ghetto that the Germans established on 8 February 1940. In his introduction to the exhibit, the artist declares his aim is to "awaken" the inhabitants of Łódź and to inspire them to reflect upon the tragic forgotten history of this old part of the city, which before the Second World War was the suburb of the Jewish working class.³⁸ This installation allows one to contemplate the abrupt end of the vibrant multicultural community of Łódź.

In the aftermath of the invasion of Łódź on 8 September 1939, the Nazis renamed the city Litzmannstadt and incorporated it into the Warthegau region [*Kraj Warty*]. During the Nazi period, Łódź became an "anti-multicultural and anti-multiethnic city." Many Poles were expelled to the *General Government* [*Generalna Gubernia*], and the Nazis subjected the remaining ethnic Poles to severe discrimination. The local Jewish population was confined to the ghetto located in the districts of Bałuty, Stare Miasto and Marysin. Only a small group of local Jews, numbering an estimated 5,000 to 8,000 individuals, survived the ghetto. This number stands in a sharp contrast to the size of the prewar local Jewish community, which on the eve of the Second World War constituted one-third of the city's population and was estimated at 230,000 people. Herzog's photographs were exhibited in a section of the Poznański industrial complex, the so-called *Manufaktura* at Ogrodowa Street. The exhibit accompanied the official commemorations of the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Liquidation of the Łódź Ghetto. These commemorations took place at the end of August 2004.³⁹

³⁶The city also erected the sculpture of Władysław Reymont, sitting on a trunk, at No. 137 Piotrkowska Street. This sculpture stands as symbol of the city's pride in the Polish writer who was a recipient of Nobel Prize and who wrote about Łódź. Of course there is a clear tension between the vision of Reymont's Łódź and the vision of the city represented by the other figures of the iron made sculptures on display at Piotrkowska Street.

³⁷For a selection of Herzog's photos see, an appendix to *Tygiel Kultury* 4-6 (2004): 2-5.

³⁸*Ibid.*: 6

³⁹See the Program of the Commemoration of the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Liquidation of the Litzmannstadt Ghetto in Łódź.

The mayor of Łódź, Jerzy Kropiwnicki, organized the Sixtieth Anniversary of the Liquidation of the Łódź Ghetto as a major, widely publicized, and international four-day set of ceremonies. In contrast to the commemorations surrounding the fiftieth anniversary of the ghetto's liquidation in 1994, which memorialized the Jewish community of Łódź through a single sculpture depicting Moses with the Decalogue – a figure strongly criticized for its irrelevance – the sixtieth anniversary ceremonies created many permanent and acclaimed commemorative sites in the city.⁴⁰ The train station Radegast Bahnhof, where the main commemorative event took place on 29 August, was renovated prior to the event. In the same area a new monument in the form of a red brick hall with an attached column in memory of the victims of the Holocaust was erected on the initiatives of the Mayor of the City and the City Council. This monument was modeled on the monument at the Valley of Jewish Communities at Yad Vashem Memorial Center in Jerusalem. The names of all the cities and towns of Poland, Germany, Austria and the Czech and Slovak regions from which Jews were brought into the Łódź Ghetto are inscribed in both Polish and Hebrew, on the interior walls of the hall. An additional commemorative plaque to the memory of Roma victims, transported from Austria by the Nazis, was also erected.

A park located at Wojska Polskiego Street dedicated to the survivors of the Łódź ghetto is another site of lasting commemoration. On 30 August 2004, a group of survivors of the ghetto, along with members of their families, planted 350 trees in this large six-hectare park. Halina Elczewska, one of the survivors of the ghetto, was the initiator of this “living monument.”⁴¹ Her role exemplifies the recent involvement of the remaining Jewish community of Łódź in commemorative practices and preservation of Jewish sites in the city. The Foundation Monumentum Iudaicum Łodzense, established in 1995 with the support of the organization, based in Israel, of the Former Residents of Łódź, represents another example of the involvement of former Jewish inhabitants of the city in the preservation of Jewish sites, such as the cemetery located at Bracka Street, the largest Jewish cemetery in Europe.⁴² City authorities regularly support these initiatives.

Various buildings and areas that once belonged to the ghetto and represent important chapters in its history were marked for the commemorative ceremonies. Maps and information about the ghetto and commemorative events were also widely circulated among the local population. In 2005 the City also planned to introduce a permanent exhibit on the former territory of the ghetto, entitled, “In the Footsteps of the Litzmannstadt Ghetto.”

A drawing by Abramek Koplłowicz, who was transported to Auschwitz with his parents as a thirteen-year-old child in August 1944, served as the logo for all pub-

⁴⁰Aleksander Klugman, former resident of Łódź, wrote a critical article about the commemorative events of the 50th Anniversary of Łódź Ghetto, see Aleksander Klugman, “Czy w Łodzi mieszkali kiedyś Żydzi?”, *Tygiel Kultury*, 1-3, 2002, 30-38. See, also, the discussion, proceeding the ceremony of unveiling of the monument on 6 November 1995. Mieczysław Gumola, “Odczytanie z kamienia. Pomnik Dekalogu,” *Kronika Miasta Łodzi*, 2, 2004, 38-44.

⁴¹See two brief reports “Drzewka w parku ocalałych,” and “Drzewka nie pozwolą zapomnieć,” *Dziennik Łódzki*, 31 September 2004, 1, 2.

⁴²On the history and activities of the *Foundation Monumentum Iudaicum Lodzense*, see the webpage of this organization, <http://www.Łódźjews.org/>

lications and signposts related to the commemorative ceremonies.⁴³ Zbigniew Nowak and the late Zbigniew Dominiak, two editors-in-chief of *Tygiel Kultury*, “discovered” Abramek’s thirteen wartime poems and drawings in 1990, and together with Abramek Koplłowicz’s half-brother, initiated the idea of giving his name to a street in the city. The City Council and City Mayor approved their project and a newly built modern complex of condominiums in one of the fashionable districts of the city was named after him in the late 1990s. Abramek Koplłowicz became the “city’s new hero” during the commemorative events of 2004. For example, representatives of the City Council visited his street to pay tribute to his memory.⁴⁴ These commemorative events represent a successful attempt to integrate the memory of Łódź’s once vibrant Jewish community into the urban space, local history, and contemporary identity of the city.

Rediscovering and Revitalizing Urban Heritage

Publications and cultural events constitute the major venues for propagating a rediscovery of the city’s multicultural past; the actual renovation and revitalization of architecture and sites embodying the multicultural heritage has been modest. Implementation of projects devoted to material culture began in the second half of the 1990s, but the major projects still await realization. Their completion depends on receiving sufficient funds from various sources, including the European Union and private investors. The present situation indicates that the city has not collected sufficient funds to put its plans for the major historical areas into effect. Even projects already approved by the City Council and Mayor of the City, are struggling to find sponsors.

One such a project is the revitalization of the Old Market [*Stary Rynek*] and the surrounding areas along Franciszkańska, Północna, Zachodnia, Lutomińska and Wojska Polskiego Streets, right up to Church Square (Kościelny Plac).⁴⁵ This is the oldest part of nineteenth-century Łódź, and the place where the main center of Jewish life was established in 1825. Advocates of the revitalization of the Old Market, united in the grassroots Association of the Friends of the Old Market, aim at renovating the entire infrastructure of the area and introducing new monuments and institutions that would memorialize the pre-1939 heritage. For example, on the western side of the Old Market, they plan to decorate the buildings with paintings depicting the pioneers of industrial Łódź: Israel Kalman Poznański, Robert Biederman, Karol Gotleib Anstadt, Abraham Prussak, Herman Konsztad, Zygmund Jarociński, Edward Heineman-Jarecki, Samuel Jezechiel Saltzman, Józef Dobraciński, Samuel Barciński and Gottfried Eckert.⁴⁶

⁴³The drawing and poems of Abramek Koplłowicz were published in *Tygiel Kultury* 4-6 (2004): 40-51.

⁴⁴I am grateful to Mr. Zbigniew Nowak, editor-in-chief of *Tygiel Kultury*, for giving me the letter of Eliezer Grynfeld, half-brother of Abramek Koplłowicz. In the letter, Grynfeld movingly describes the sudden and unexpected rediscovery of Abramek Koplłowicz by representatives of the City Office.

⁴⁵See The Project of Revitalization of the Old Market in Łódź. I would like to thank Marian Panek, Chairman of The Association of the Friends of the Old City, for providing me with the copy of the project. See also <http://www.staremiasto.Łódź.pl> and <http://www.turystyka.Łódź.pl>

⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 5.

On the eastern side of the Old Market, they plan to introduce paintings depicting the six leading authorities of different religions that formed the social and cultural landscape of pre-1939 Łódź, including among others, the Bishop of the Orthodox Church, Jerzy Korenistow; Rabbi Eliash Chaim Maizel; and the representative of the Lutheran Church, Reverend Rudold Gustaw Gundlach.⁴⁷

On Północna Street, they plan to set up a Museum of the History of the Electric Trams of Łódź. This project, which aims at emphasizing one of the most modern aspects of nineteenth-century Łódź, is modeled on the concept of museums of transport found in other European cities. Advocates of the revitalization project also plan to establish a Center for Education about the Holocaust on Północna Street. This indicates a growing interest in education against racism, xenophobia and antisemitism, in a city, which not so long ago, had the reputation of being a city infamous for its antisemitic graffiti.

Another project that heavily depends on garnering sufficient funds for its realization is the revitalization of Księży Młyn, the unique historical complex and so-called "Kingdom" of Karol Wilhelm Scheibler. Księży Młyn was built in the late 1860s through to the 1870s. It consists of three main urban features: workers' housing, which provided housing to 321 families and which was modeled on workers' housing built by artisans such as the one at Bedford Park near London (1875); the cotton mill, a four-story factory built in red brick and in the style of a fortress; and the residential area – the Herbst villa and surrounding garden at Przędzelniana Street No. 72. This villa was named after Edward Herbst, husband of Matylda, who was Karol W. Scheibler's eldest daughter. Scheibler also built a school for the children of his factory workers and other employees in 1876, a shop for his workers in 1877, and a workers' hospital in 1886; the latter functions as a hospital to this day. The City has agreed to cover the costs of renovations of four out of the eighteen double-story buildings, which Scheibler had constructed for the most outstanding and productive workers and managers of his factory, and has been looking for investors who would finance the remaining structures of the revitalization of the project.⁴⁸

The project of revitalization of the Manufaktura, the large complex and so-called "Kingdom" of Israel Poznański, at Ogrodowa Street No. 17, also suffers from a similar lack of funding, though it is the most advanced revitalization project in the city.⁴⁹ Like Karol W. Scheibler's industrial complex, Poznański's Manufaktura also comprises a factory built in the style of a red brick fortress, workers' housing based at Ogrodowa Street, and the formerly residential Poznański Palace at the corner of Ogrodowa and Zachodnia Streets, now housing the Museum of the History of Łódź. This is the largest postindustrial complex in Łódź. It is located on a territory of 270,000 square meters. Revitalization of all buildings belonging to this complex began in the spring of 1999. The project was scheduled to be completed by the end of 2005. The City takes pride in this project advertising it as the "biggest project of ur-

⁴⁷Ibid. p. 7. On the history of various religions and sacral architecture in Łódź, see Dzieciuchowicz, et al. *Rola wyznań*,

⁴⁸See the conversation of Luiza Skawińska with the chief architect of Łódź, Piotr Biliński, "Aby miasto rosło w siłę, a ludzie żyli dostatnio..." *Tygiel Kultury* 4 (1997): 47.

⁴⁹See *Uproszczony lokalny program rewitalizacji*, p. 15.

ban revitalization in Central Europe” and as “a city in a city.”⁵⁰ The project aims at transforming Poznański’s Manufaktura into a recreational and commercial center that would serve the local community. Its advocates also hope that it will generate interest on a wider national level. In a preliminary advertising flyer, the City has announced the creation of an American style shopping mall, a giant car dealership, a home and garden center, a multiscreen cinema complex, a Museum of Modern Arts, a Museum of Science and Technology for children, a bowling alley, a hotel, and a Heritage Museum of Poznański’s Manufaktura. The City has also stressed the European roots behind the inspiration for the revitalization of the Poznański industrial buildings complex. They claim to be emulating four successful revitalization projects which have already taken place in Central Europe: the Vitra Design Museum in Berlin, the MEO Contemporary Art Collection in Budapest, the Stilwerks Arts Centre in Hamburg, and a hotel converted from an old water tower built between 1868 and 1872, in the town of Wasserturn.⁵¹

The recently completed renovation project of the oldest Orthodox church in Łódź, the Church of St. Aleksander Newski, located at the corner of Kiliński and Narutowicza Streets, is a good example of the inclusion into the local heritage of a building that for a long time was associated with Russian rule. This Orthodox church was built in 1884 according to the design of the city’s chief architect Hilary Majewski, who also designed Poznański’s Manufaktura. Only very recently has this Russian Orthodox church been identified as an important historical landmark and tourist attraction in the city space.⁵²

The City Office recently announced the implementation, scheduled for 2005, of a new project known as “tourist paths” to celebrate the multicultural past. The following four paths are in the process of preparation: “Palaces and Residences of Łódź,” “German Łódź,” “Jewish Łódź” and “Industrial Architecture of Łódź.”⁵³ These projects aim to raise the level of historical knowledge about the city among the local residents by introducing permanent signposts and metal maps attached to walls. This project has yet to be implemented, so it is too early to comment on its possible acceptance and popularity by local society and by domestic and foreign tourists. It is also difficult to comment on the aesthetic aspects of such signposts and maps, and on the scale of their integration into the urban landscape.

The most advanced renovations of historical buildings are visible at Piotrkowska Street, the most expensive and well-maintained street in Łódź, with many shops offering famous European designer brands. Renovations have also taken place at T. Kościuszki Avenue, which runs parallel to Piotrkowska Street. Generally it is new private owners who are responsible for restoring the exteriors and interiors of buildings. But in the late 1990s and at the beginning of 2000, the city also carried out a number of important renovations of historical buildings recognized as exceptional

⁵⁰See the two page A-3 flyer *Manufaktura News. A City in the City*. I would like to thank the employees of the Department of Promotion, Tourism and International Co-operation of the City of Łódź for supplying me with this flyer.

⁵¹Ibid., p. 2.

⁵²See the description of this Church on the website of the City Office in the Tourism section <http://www.uml.Łódź.pl/indeksik.php3?menu2=6&zapytanie=6,02.02,17> and Budziarek et al. *Łódź*, pp. 106-110.

⁵³I received this information in January 2005, at the Urbanization Office, affiliated with the City Office.

architectural jewels. For example, in 1998, the City renovated the facade of the five-story building at Piotrkowska No. 143, built in 1898 by the well-respected nineteenth century architect David Lande, a member of the local Jewish community.⁵⁴

Yet on leaving Piotrkowska Street for other areas, the impression one might receive is of entering a quite different world, one of crumbling historical buildings, of tired worn-down facades with accretions of a half-century of grime, of places where no one seems to care about the past or present, of decayed graffiti-lined streets, unrenovated interior cobbled courtyards where small children play football and, above all, a lasting impression of emptiness, absence and the unheralded passing of time. One can find plenty of all the above in Śródmieście, the oldest section of Łódź's suburb, which reveals the extent to which the destruction of this city in the post-1939 periods still impacts on its contemporary identity. These urban spaces reveal how difficult it is to bring about a new and much desired "Rebirth" and "Golden Age" to match the historical "Rebirth" and "the Golden Age." Could contemporary Łódź become once again the new Promised Land? And for whom, given the fact that Łódź is a city of departed historical communities, and moreover of limited economic opportunities, a place from which young people tend to depart for Warsaw and abroad?

For, in marked contrast to the nineteenth century, twenty-first century Łódź is an almost totally ethnically homogenous – and far from affluent – metropolis. The city's political and cultural elites have turned to the pre-1939 past to conceive and create a new post-communist, forward-looking European entity, where bourgeois and multicultural narratives are privileged. In this way, moral and social aspects: that of taking responsibility for the multicultural past and saving it from oblivion through memorialization and symbolic integration into official history and contemporary identity, are mixed with a more pragmatic aspects: that soliciting financial and technological aid among foreign institutions and investors, including from those communities whose ancestors once lived in the city.⁵⁵

Forging a new identity of place does not necessary need to end in failure, though given the enormous changes in the social and cultural landscapes in post-1939 periods, and given the presence of the meaningful void in the city, one cannot escape reflecting that there are some salient limitations to this project. Łódź's rediscovery and successful integration of its pre-1918 multicultural and bourgeois past depends on the reception of this project by local society at large. Are the urban spaces dedicated to the celebration of the multicultural past and to the commemoration of its tragic disappearance meaningful – not only to the local political and cultural elites – but to non-elites as well? Time alone may show, whether or not the bourgeois, multiethnic and multicultural past will be accepted by the local inhabitants as an essential part of their heritage – and key aspect of their future identity.

⁵⁴See the entry on the history of this Neo-Renaissance building at <http://www.uml.Łódź.pl/>

⁵⁵A good illustration of the instrumental aspect of the rediscovery of the multicultural past are comments of Jerzy Kropiwnicki, Mayor of City, made prior to his trip to Tel Aviv with twenty-two local businessmen. At the beginning of January 2005 Kropiwnicki stated: "It is high time that the relationship between Łódź and Tel Aviv was cultivated not only on the social and cultural level, but also on the economic level." See "Przegląd Wydarzeń," *Z Misją do Izraela, Urząd Miasta Łodzi*, 3 January 2005. <http://www.uml.Łódź.pl>