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REGION
and
REGIONALISM
No. 11

**EASTERN, WESTERN, COSMOPOLITAN
– THE INFLUENCE OF THE MULTIETHNIC
AND MULTIDENOMINATIONAL CULTURAL
HERITAGE ON THE CULTURAL LANDSCAPE
OF CENTRAL POLAND**

**1. CULTURAL HERITAGE AND ITS IDENTITY
– THE THEORY**

The concept of cultural heritage has been formulated almost 100 years ago. Since that time it was expanded, gaining in importance in the last dozen or so years. There are further objects that seem worth protecting, there is also the problem of selecting what the heritage includes, i.e. what to preserve, how to properly identify it and shape it so it becomes a memory of objects, qualities and places that reflect the widest possible social image. It should be remembered that the cultural heritage does not only include historical objects, spatial layouts of towns and villages, old factories, but also the culture and history of a region, as well as its spiritual legacy. Cultural heritage should therefore represent the history of all social groups, even the ones that are marginal in a society (such as the ethnic and religious minorities in Poland). Only then will it become an important element for the development of awareness and knowledge of history. Therefore, no phenomenon can be selected and can have cultural heritage significance, unless it is within the context of a historical narrative.

Assuming the spatial aspect in identifying cultural heritage makes it almost synonymous with the concept of cultural landscape. This concept is used in many sciences, most notably in geography, even though it is also present in architecture, sociology, ethnology and biology. At the same time, it is used more colloquially to mean a view (e.g. when talking about a beautiful or ugly landscape).

2. NATURAL, HISTORICAL, POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC CONDITIONS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF SETTLEMENT PROCESSES IN CENTRAL POLAND

Speaking about the cultural heritage of the area in question, one has to remember about the specific conditions for the shaping of settlement process there. They were different from other regions of the country, despite the fact that the history of settlement in the area dates back to the beginnings of the Polish state, and its territorial organization centres evolved as some of the oldest. Such development was impacted, among others, by unfavourable physiographic conditions, watersheds and large river valleys, as well as a significant distance from the historical centre of cultural and economic development, and the location on the border of several historic districts. A historical turn, with significant implications for the area, came after the loss of Polish independence, brought about by Prussia, Russia and Austria as a result of the partitions in late 18th century. In the 1920s, one of the biggest textile industry regions in Europe started developing, initiated by the authorities of the Polish Commonwealth, which the region was a part of and which was autonomous within the Russian Empire. From the beginning, it was accompanied by dynamic social and settlement processes that led to a peculiar settlement inversion. It consisted in the fact that the least populated and developed areas have become the most urbanised and industrialised centres of socio-economic life of the region, while the historically important centres on the outskirts fell into decline and lost its significance.

This resulted in major natural transformations, as well as significant changes in the intensity of land use. These transformations were initiated by a variety of factors most importantly political, economic, social and ethno-religious ones. As the title of this study suggests, the authors will focus mainly on the political and ethno-religious factors, bearing in mind that they cannot be separated from the others.

3. POLITICAL AND ETHNO-RELIGIOUS FACTORS, THEIR DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF ANALYSIS

Poland is probably one of the few countries in the world, certainly in Europe, where the development of the cultural landscape and, above all, of architectural forms, was largely influenced by political factors in the last two centuries. Without a doubt, this effect is a simple consequence of the loss of Poland's statehood for more than a hundred years. In countries with well-established

political independence, the impact of this factor on the development of the cultural landscape is not dominant. In those countries, the development of architecture is usually in line with changing trends and fashions in world architecture, though, of course, certain national characteristics and preferences in different national styles are also present.

Unlike other Polish territories occupied by the invaders, the situation in the region we are discussing was quite different. The political factor played a lesser role than the national and religious ones in shaping the cultural landscape, especially in the cities.

We will discuss the cities of the Łódź province, located in Central Poland (thus the title of this paper)¹. The aim of this paper is to define the role and impact of ethnic (particularly German, Jewish and Russian) and religious (Protestant, Jewish and Orthodox) minorities on the cultural landscape of the cities in this area. Considerations made in the article are part of our research on national and religious minorities in Poland, including their cultural heritage.

4. THE DEVELOPMENT OF MULTIETHNIC AND MULTIDENOMINATIONAL HERITAGE OF CENTRAL POLAND

Poland, which disappeared off the map in 1795 after eight hundred years of political independence, divided among three neighbouring powers, was under the influence of standards, movements and fashions from the invader countries, as well as of global aesthetic models. As a result, three types of architectural forms can be seen in most larger cities in Poland:

- buildings with a national form, created before and during the partitions (up to 1795),
- buildings with national characteristics of the occupying countries (different in each of the three partitions),
- buildings with cosmopolitan features related to global aesthetic trends (Koter and Kulesza 2005, Kulesza and Rykała 2006).

In the first decades of the partition, the cultural landscape of the cities in this area was dominated by classical style, which reminded Poles of independent Poland. It dominated in the autonomous Polish Commonwealth in the years

¹ Łódź Province has a population of nearly 2.7 million, the area of 18,219 km², so the population density is quite high: 147 people/km² (average for Poland is 124 people/km²). Its administrative boundaries include 42 cities and more than 5,000 villages.

1815–1830. During this period, all public buildings and most of the residential buildings were constructed in that style. Newly-formed industrial settlements of the time also followed a classical layout. Later, after the loss of autonomy, classical style began to give way to new forms of urban development, associated with the architectural features of partitioning countries. The range of their development was different in intensity for each of the partitions. It had the strongest impact on the urban landscape in the Prussian and, partly, Austrian partitions. However, in the Russian partition, where the cities we are discussing were located, the influence of Russian architecture were practically limited to the buildings of Imperial administration, military barracks and sacred buildings (e.g. in Łęczycza, Łódź, Sieradz, Tomaszów Mazowiecki and, especially, in Piotrków Trybunalski). This was due to the fact that Russia did not develop settlements in Polish territory, even after the Commonwealth lost its autonomy. Only Russian officials, military, police, teachers and others came to the conquered country, and only temporarily. They did not build their own houses, but used rented apartments.

The ethnic factor played a much more significant role than the political one in shaping the cultural landscape of the Central Polish cities. Let us look at Łódź – the capital of the province which, owing to a textile settlement created in 1823, grew from a small agricultural town into the main textile industry centre in Poland and the second, after Warsaw, largest city in the country. The urban layout of the city and the construction of the first plants were handled by the autonomous government of the Polish Commonwealth, but the labour came from abroad. As a result, Łódź became a unique multiethnic and multid denominational conglomerate and one of the most cosmopolitan cities in Poland at the time. The same thing happened – on a smaller scale – in Pabianice, Zgierz, Ozorków, Sieradz, Piotrków and other cities in the region. Each of the ethnic groups inhabiting them had slightly different tastes and aesthetic standards, as manifested in the architectural forms of buildings and structures constructed by them and for them².

The Jews were the oldest ethnic minority in the Łódź region. Traces of their presence date back to the early Middle Ages. The first mentions of Jewish communities in the area come from the 15th century. In the early 16th century, there were five Jewish settlements in the area: in Łęczycza, Inowłódz, Kutno, Łowicz and Rawa Mazowiecka. At the turn of the 17th and 18th century, Jewish

² There are not many objects related to a given nation from the period before the partitions in the modern landscape of Łódź province. Those that have remained, mostly single buildings, are often so changed in its appearance, that it is difficult to see any of their original fragments.

communities underwent rapid development. This was due to the influx of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Borderlands and abroad. At the end of the 18th century, Jews were the majority population in many cities (they dominated over the Christians in such towns as Stryków, Łęczyca, Głowno, Kutno and Sobota). In the 19th century, the legal situation of the Jewish population changed. The ban on Jewish settlement was lifted (even in cities endowed with the privilege of *de non tolerandis Judaeis*). This was conducive to their economic independence. During the dynamic industrialisation of this area, practically since the 1820s, we can see the increase of the Jewish population in industrial cities and settlements, which was initially significant, to later become rapid. It happened mainly in Łódź, which was home to 295 Jews in 1820 (33.7% of the population), 8,463 in 1864 (20.3%), 138,900 in 1921 (30%) and 230 in 1939 (33.8%) (Rosin 1980, Urban 1994, Samuś 1997, Puś 1998, Rykała 2010). In other cities of the area, the size of Jewish settlement was relatively comparable.

The first German settlers arrived to the Łódź province in the late eighteenth century. This was related to the second partition of Poland in 1793, resulting in the area in question coming under Prussian rule, albeit for a short time. The result of the Prussian colonisation was the creation of a number of rural settlements. The settlement wave that came during the so called handicraft colonisation was especially important for the cities. It was organised after 1815 by the authorities of the autonomous Polish Commonwealth, due to the creation of the textile industry region, which was supposed to include some older urban centres, as well as the new ones. The number of Germans was steadily growing, though the increase was not as dynamic as in the case of Jews. For example, there were 12 Germans in Łódź in 1820, 52.2 thousand in 1895 (31.4% of the population) and just 53.7 thousand in 1938 (8.0%) (Puś 1998).

Germans were the economically strongest part of the urban population (especially in Łódź), and it was owing to them, and their ties to their motherland, the western architectural models started entering Poland. They found a typically German expression in industrial construction. German factories from the second half of the 19th century looked like massive red-brick Moorish fortresses. In residential buildings, the German bourgeoisie was most fond of Viennese and Berlin architectural standards, first historicism, then eclecticism. In the case of Viennese standards, this meant shaping the facades in the neo-baroque style, while the Prussian models favoured neo-roman or neo-gothic style, or an eclectic mixture of both. Similar, ethnically conditioned differences could be seen in *Art Nouveau* construction. German investors erecting such buildings tended to use the influences of the Viennese *Jugend-still*, including the characteristic half-timbered elements (Kulesza and Rykała 2006, Fig. 1).

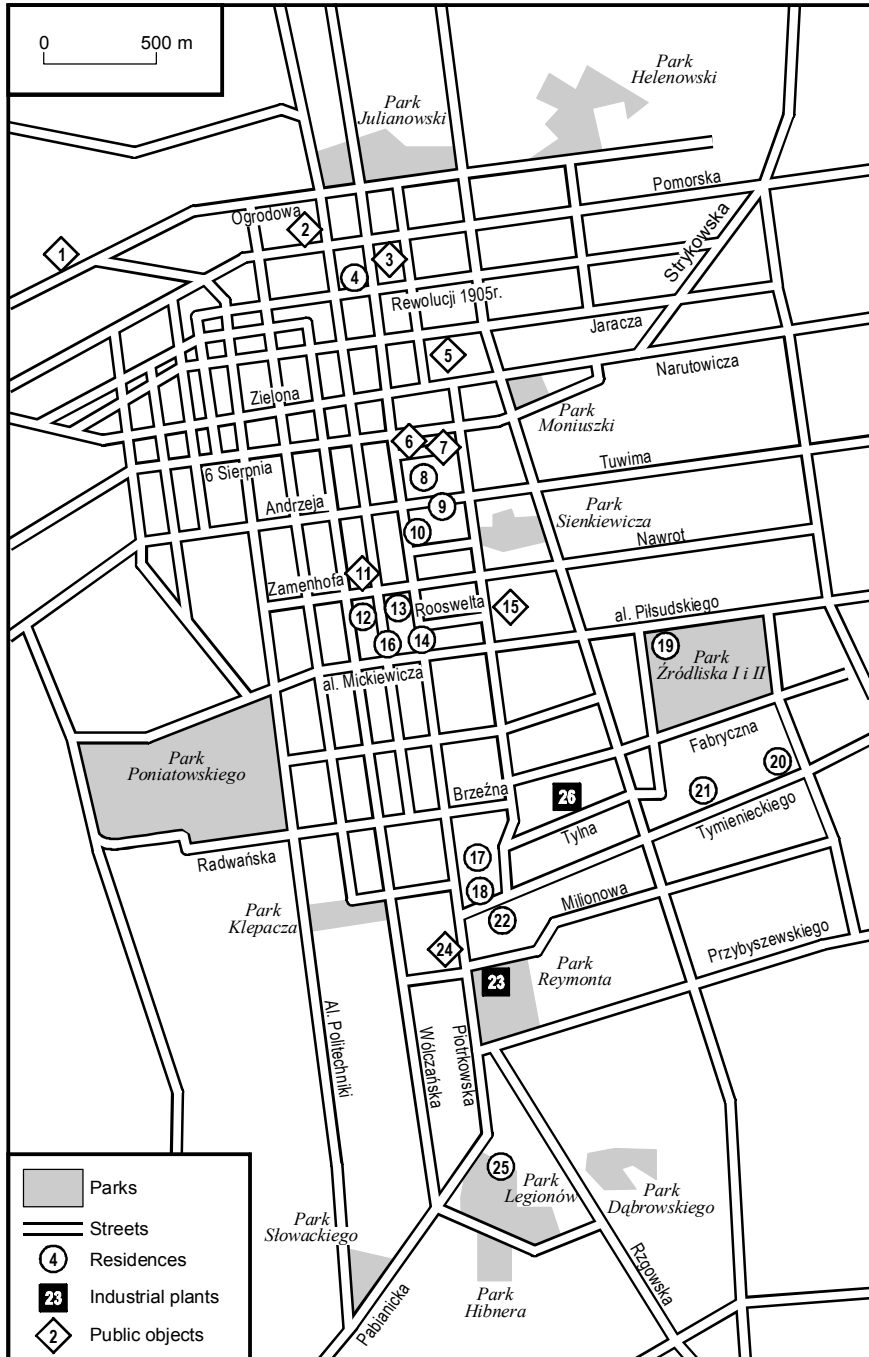


Fig. 1. Examples of preserved German heritage in contemporary townscape
Source: M. Baranowska and A. Rykała (2009)

It should be noted that a large proportion of the German population was then residing in rural areas, which was rare in the case of the Jews, who were, almost exclusively, living in the cities. Even today, in many villages in the area, we can see constructions and buildings (residential and outhouses) erected by the German settlers of the time, that differ from the others.

Speaking about the impact of ethnic minorities on the rural landscape, one should note that there are 18th-century villages built by Hauländer settlers, who came to drain wetlands, forests and damp wildernesses on the Ner river near Łęczyca and Sieradz. These are characteristic swampland linear villages and loose colonies with spread-out, separated homesteads. Their past, apart from the character of the space created by them, is also evidenced by their toponymy – the name Holendry or Olędry (Hauländer) appearing in their names.

On the other hand, the 19th century saw a prominent presence of German settlers in the area, who left behind regular linear villages with brick buildings. Dating back to the break of the 18th and 19th centuries, there are few spatial arrangements of villages founded during the so called Frederick's colonisation, such as the well known star-shaped Nowosolna, now severely damaged by modern chaotic development, or the regular rectangular shape of Ksawerów on the border of Łódź and Pabianice.

It is significant, however, that it is difficult to discern specific national forms in buildings erected by Jews. The exception are the objects of worship: synagogues, houses of worship and cemeteries. We believe, that the wealthy Jewish factory owners and landlords, who spoke Yiddish and remained under the influence of German culture, also used German trends in this case. The specific Jewish contribution can only be seen later, at the beginning of the 20th century and in the interwar period, when the concept of forest cities, modelled after Howard's garden cities, became widespread in Poland. The biggest group of seasonal inhabitants of these forest cities were Jews, who erected characteristic wooden summer houses, single- or double storey, with attics, numerous porches and carved decorative elements. Garden cities were mostly located around Łódź, in Kolumna (now a part of Łask), Tuszyń and Brzeziny.

It is worth mentioning that the Russian officials and police brought with them a custom of building suburban summer houses, the so called dachas, erected most often in the forests surrounding the city. Apart from places of worship, these houses are virtually the only cultural traces of this nation in the area.

The Łódź province can boast rich traditions and some areas with high historical and cultural values. Every era has left its mark here. In particular, this history can be seen in Łódź, with its largest preserved complex of eclectic urban development. Initially, the city developed along one street – Piotrkowska, where

the most representative tenements, palaces and public buildings were constructed. Most of the city comprised of enclaves belonging to individual factory owners. The main elements of these complexes were the factories, with the adjacent residences of their owners. There were often colonies of workers' houses located in their vicinity. The palaces of local factory owners, as well as numerous tenements along Piotrkowska street and its side streets from the second half of 19th and early 20th century became the biggest complex of historicising, eclectic and Art Nouveau architecture in Poland. Most of these objects are the remnants of ethnic and religious minorities who used to live here. During its industrial development, Łódź was built by settlers from different parts of Europe, who left behind factories, palaces, housing estates and public buildings such as schools, hospitals, banks, theatres and more, that serve as symbols of that multicultural, multiethnic and multid denominational city. Unfortunately, some of these objects, left unmaintained and often abandoned, is under great threat of destruction.

Most historic factories were built in the second half of the 19th century. They form uniquely valuable complexes in Łódź and separate complexes in Ozorków, Pabianice, Tomaszów Mazowiecki and Zgierz. Their characteristic feature is the direct vicinity of their owners' residences. These so-called industrial-residential complexes are sometimes accompanied by workers' housing estates (e.g. Scheibler's or Poznański's in Łódź) (Kulesza and Rykała 2006).

The most prominent contribution of minorities in shaping the urban space of Łódź region are their places of worship. In the case of ethnic groups listed here, we can say that the sacral space they have created is unique. As we have mentioned, each of these minorities identified with a different denomination, though claiming that there was some 'organic relationship' between them would be an oversimplification. The Germans, largely Lutherans, constructed mostly evangelical churches (in Aleksandrów Łódzki, Konstantynów, Łódź, Pabianice, Zduńska Wola, Zgierz and other places). Some of them (like the churches of Saints Peter and Paul in Pabianice or St. Matthew in Łódź) still serve the evangelical community, identifying with German and Polish, but also other nationalities. A characteristic feature of the landscape of some Central Polish cities are Orthodox churches. This uniqueness stems from the fact that the Orthodox Christian ecumene was and still is connected with the eastern part of Poland. In Łódź, Piotrków and Skierniewice, the Orthodox churches were mostly constructed for Tsar's officials and soldiers, as well as, in the last city, for the Tsar himself, who had a summer residence in Skierniewice (Fig. 2). In the first two cities, the churches are still used by Orthodox Christians. In the 18th and 19th centuries, many synagogues were also built, and their characteristic form

complemented the cultural landscape of local towns. Unfortunately, only a few examples survived till today, and they are all in very poor condition. The ruins of old synagogues can be found in Żychlin and, until recently, i.e. until its demolition, in Widawa. There is a reconstructed synagogue in Inowłódz. Only two synagogues in Łódź are still used for religious purposes.

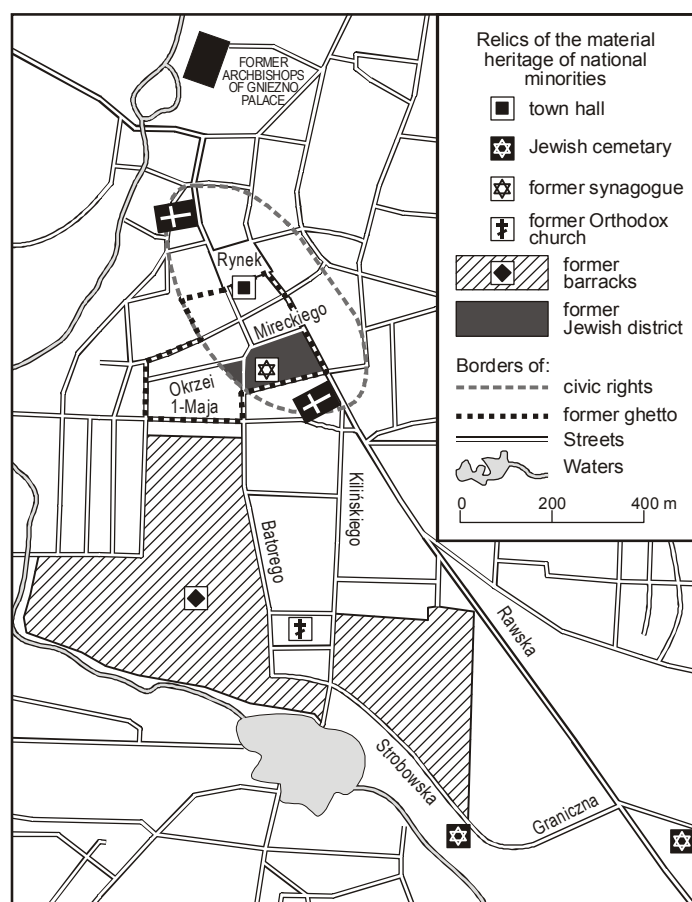
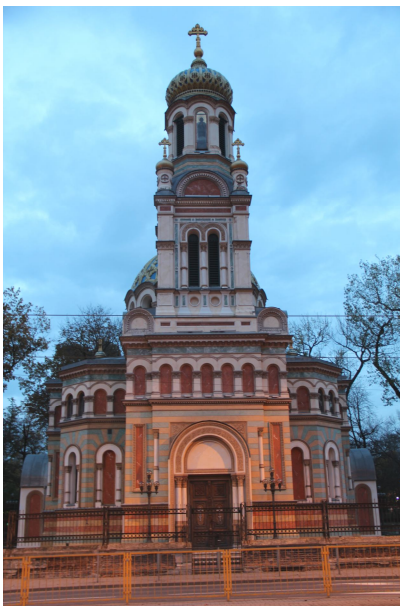


Fig. 2. The contribution of ethnic minorities
in urban development in Skierniewice
Source: A. Rykała (2009)

We also can not forget about the creators of what often were masterpieces, the architects of various cultural and ethnic origins, which is rightfully pointed out in case of Łódź by J. Salm (2003, p. 132): ‘The greatest Protestant temple is the St. Matthew, inspired by Romanesque architecture of the Rhine, built with the help of a famous Berliner – Franz Schwechten. The result is an almost

textbook example of Wilhelmian German construction in Łódź. The Alexander Nevsky Orthodox church owes its beautiful Byzantine form to the St. Petersburg Academy graduate and Radom native Hilary Majewski but, we should not forget, also to the generous donations from Catholic, Israelite and Protestant factory owners. The St. Alexius Orthodox church is a work of another Pole, Franciszek Chełmiński, born in Augustów and educated in Petersburg. In this way, there were buildings in Łódź reminiscent of the styles from Saint Petersburg and Moscow.



Photos 1 and 2. Orthodox churches in Łódź
(St. Alexander Nevsky and St. Olga)
(authors)

Synagogues were designed by architects of Jewish origin. This was the case with a beautiful Moorish-style synagogue at Wolborska street in the Old Town, built by one of the major local builders of the late 19th century – Adolf Zeligson. The Neo-Romanesque synagogue at Zachodnia street was designed Gustav Landau-Gutenteger and the plans for the greatest one, the so-called progressive one, was prepared according to an order from wealthy founders by the German architect Adolf Wolff. It is clear that various tendencies intersected and mixed in Łódź. The orthodox Jewish community erected a building in the Old Town with clear Oriental and Moorish forms. On the other hand, the temple at Spacerowa street was reminiscent of the Western European «reformed» places of worship. Not without a reason, it was designed by Wolff, the author of synagogues in Stuttgart and Nuremberg'. Their work left a clear mark on the cultural landscape of today's Łódź. The factory owners did their best to make their cites equal with

other European cities. Therefore, there was a custom that all factory owners (regardless of nationality) paid for everything, together cared for their shared business, as well as temples, hospitals, credit societies or, in case of Łódź, train or tram lines. As early as 1865, Łódź gained a railway connection with Koluszki, as well as became the first city in the Polish Commonwealth to introduce electric trams in 1898.

A very vivid picture of the ethnic and religious relations in Łódź, though it can be expanded to other cities in the region, in the interwar period was painted by M. Budziarek (1997), who wrote that Łódź of the 19th century and the first three decades of the 20th century was, in many respect, unique. 'First of all, several nationalities, cultures, denominations and religions lived side by side in a small area. Out of necessity, Catholics and Protestants, Orthodox Christians and the followers of Judaism, as well as Mariavites and Muslims functioned side by side. Lutherans and Baptists, Orthodox and Progressive Jews walked the same streets. Mariavites worked at a Lutheran's factory, while the latter funded altars in a Catholic church. Latin Catholic designed an Orthodox church and a Jew funded the construction of a Catholic temple for the workers at his factory. The Lutherans were treated at a hospital run by Baptists and Calvinists and Mariavites handed out free meals to hungry Catholics' (Budziarek 2003, p. 79), and continues: 'The society of this ethnic and religious melting was building an industrial Łódź, which later became a great industrial metropolis and one of the most important industrial centres in the Second Polish Republic. The end of the uniqueness of this multidominational city came during World War II. At that time, the Jewish population was completely exterminated by the Nazis. The post-war situation has in turn forced many Lutherans of German nationality to leave Łódź, and the dominance of the Catholic population has become unquestioned' (Budziarek 1997, p. 34).

5. CONCLUSION

The landscape of Central Poland is marked by multinational, multidominational and multicultural relations. It is in this area, as in Lower Silesia and the former Eastern Borderlands, that the existence of Poles, Germans, Jews, Czechs, and many other nations coincided. They lived side by side in Łódź, but also in other cities of the current province, without any greater conflicts, creating their own 'small homelands', at the same time leaving a unique mark of their presence, which speaks to the people of today with the power of its expression and architectural beauty of its buildings, the reverie of its cemeteries, the

solemnity of the places of worship, the calm of its parks and the tumult of its streets.

The German element, both Protestant and Catholic was the most expansive one, especially in the newly-formed industrial cities. The Germans were a well-organised community with well-functioning institutions and organisations (crafts, social, athletic) and vibrant social institutions (Budziarek 2003, p. 84). Many of them underwent Polonisation and became loyal to their new Polish homeland, for which they suffered painful losses during the occupation, as was the case with the Geyer family.

It is also needless to explain how much of a loss, not only for the Central Polish cities, the extermination of the Jewish population was. We have to bear in mind, that it made a huge contribution into the development of industrial cities, first by creating the financial capital, then also the industrial one and, finally, significantly strengthening the largely Polonised intelligentsia. It also left a significant, lasting mark on the cultural landscape of the cities, leaving behind numerous beautiful buildings that they owned or designed. Unfortunately, not many of the diverse objects created by the Jewish minority are left in the contemporary cultural landscape of Central Poland. Factory and residential buildings (tenements, palaces) are the best preserved, while places of worship are the most neglected. After World War II, many of them changed their purpose, some were converted and adapted for new functions, while others fell in disrepair.

Representatives of the two other nations, i.e. Poles and Russians, as well as of several smaller nations, whose material contribution was not as significant (but creatively very important!), jointly created the face of the cities of Central Poland. The cities, one might say, that belonged to at least four cultures.

Although World War II destroyed this common heritage, the multiethnic and multidominational traditions of Central Poland, with their lasting monuments of material and spiritual culture, have remained to a bigger or lesser extent, depending on their location. We should keep in mind that those cities were built by people that differed a lot, but were able to communicate and work together regardless of these differences, thus creating a cultural landscape of local centres that was unique among other cities.

The degree of architectural and spatial transformation in the region, almost without exception bears the hallmarks of a degradation of a traditional cultural environment. This phenomenon, in addition to the spreading of worthless architectural trends known all over the country, also includes spatial chaos, which is also aggravated by the unsupervised expansion of holiday construction. That is why certain legal forms of protection aimed at counteracting these

processes should be strictly observed. The need of observing them is evidenced by the sad data that we partially quoted here. Otherwise, a number of objects attesting to multicultural character of this region will soon be found exclusively in illustrations.

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