

**A child – the subject or “the object” of school celebrations,
customs, and ceremonies?
An attempt to outline the problem on the example of educational
and child care institutions in Łódź in the 19th and 20th centuries**

Abstract: The purpose of the article was to present, with regard to Łódź multinational and multi-religious contexts of the 19th and 20th centuries, the type, course, and meaning of widely understood school celebrations, in which children were the main actors. The intention of the author was to answer the key issue of this study: did children, who rehearsed for school celebrations and events and participated in them, play the role of the subject of the educational process or were they a kind of a tool, i.e. the object of the influence of the school, that is to say its owners (e.g. boards of charitable organizations or municipal or church authorities), education authorities, teachers, or carers. To what extent did the organisation of school events result from rituals of the educational institution concerned and to what extent was the need for this kind of “ceremonies” influenced by the local (social and political) environment?

The historical background of the paper is the time before the Great War, the years of 1914-1918, and Poland in the interwar period. Taking the historical and pedagogical aspects referred to above into account, the author tried to present the events with child participants held in institutions run by charitable organisations (the period until 1914); ceremonies related to the promotion of pupils in the first grades of municipal schools to next grades (the years of 1914-1918); and celebrations and ceremonies held in care institutions for girls and boys.

The research is based on archive materials, newspaper articles, and historical and current literature.

Keywords: History of Education of the 19th and 20th Centuries; Elementary Schools in Łódź; School Customs in Łódź Before World War I; School Celebrations in Łódź in 1914-1918; Ceremonies in Child Care Institutions in Łódź in the Interwar Period

Foreword

School celebrations were and still are an indispensable aspect of school life, understood as, on the one hand, a social institution and, on the other hand, as a community

of several interdependent bodies: teachers, pupils and parents/carers¹. The second factor, i.e. the school community, provides some kind of cultural transmission through specialist teaching and learning activities. The cultural transmission, concerning both physical and symbolic content, includes school celebrations, customs and rituals. They are constantly modified as a result of sociocultural processes, but the changes that they undergo and that may be observed – through research – within them, show certain trends, characteristic of a given historical period, taking place in social life, in the area of culture and politics.

The purpose of this article is to reconstruct – with regard to the multinational and multi-religious context of Łódź of the 19th and 20th centuries – the types, course and meaning of school celebrations, in the broad meaning of the term, whose main “actors” were children. The reference point is the institutional space, i.e. celebrations in selected Łódź educational and child care facilities, such as schools, pre-schools, nurseries or child care houses². The intention of the author was to answer the key issue of this study: did children, who rehearsed for school celebrations and events and participated in them, play the role of the subject of the educational process or were they a kind of tool, i.e. the object of the influence of the school, that is to say its owners (e.g. boards of charitable organisations or municipal or church authorities), education authorities, teachers, or carers. Were the school celebrations organised because of the school rituals, or maybe because there was a demand for them from the local (social, political, religious) community?

The article is divided into three parts of different historical background: the period before 1914, World War I and the interwar period. Considering the historical and educational aspects, the analysis covers celebrations with child participation in institutions managed by charity organisations in Łódź (period until 1914), ceremonies associated with the promotion of pupils – attendants of literacy courses to the next grade (1914-1918) and religious celebrations in care institutions for girls and boys (the 2nd Republic of Poland).

The research was based mainly on archives and newspaper articles, source materials and contemporary papers. Subheadings are quotations from descriptions of school celebrations.

The “temporal and spatial” optics of the 19th and 20th century Łódź requires presenting – although to a limited extent – the city’s demography at that time.

In mid 19th century, Łódź became a multinational city, with multiple languages, religions and cultures, and the reasons for that were of economic nature. The development of industry and trade was the immediate cause of demographic and social changes. Between the years 1865 and 1914, the number of residents grew by more than 18 times, from 32,500 to 630,000³. In the years preceding World War I, Łódź was inhabited by Poles,

¹ The concept of a school may be analysed from as number of perspectives – as: 1) a type of a social institution and at the same time the basic organisational unit of the educational system, whose main duty is to educate and raise children and youth; 2) the building of an educational institution; 3) a community of teachers and pupils. B. MILERSKI, B. ŚLIWERSKI, *Pedagogika. PWN Leksykon*, Warszawa 2000, p. 227.

² The selection of the presented institutions and their celebrations was based on the availability of source materials collected by the author during the research.

³ W. PUŚ, *Warunki i czynniki rozwoju Łodzi (1820-1939)*. [in:] *Dzieje Żydów w Łodzi 1820-1944. Wybrane problemy*, ed. W. PUŚ, S. LISZEWSKI, Łódź 1991, p. 16.

Germans, Jews, Russians and other nationals. The city had its own language, culture, religion and education. The national heterogeneity of Łódź was also reflected in differences within respective denominations. There were Christians (Roman Catholics, Mariavites⁴, Evangelical Protestants, Orthodox Christians) as well as representatives of Judaism and other denominations⁵ living in the city. Before World War I, the denominational composition of Łódź was as follows: Roman Catholics – 50.6%, Judaists – 32.1%, Evangelical Protestants – 15.1%, Orthodox Christians – 1.1% and other nationalities – 1.0%⁶. At the beginning of 1914, of the almost 482,000 of the city's residents Catholics represented 52.5%, Jews – 34.0% and Protestants – 13.5%⁷.

In the years from 1914 to 1918, due to depopulation (military conscription, emigration, displacement), the number of population changed radically. Catholics still remained the dominant group among Łódź residents, followed by Judaists, but Evangelical Protestants became much less numerous, and representatives of the Orthodox Church and other denominations were scarce⁸.

When Poland regained independence in 1918, no significant demographic changes took place in Łódź, apart from the number of residents. Łódź was still multinational and had the status of the working-class city. In 1921, it was inhabited by 451,974 persons⁹. Polish nationals were still the most numerous (61.9%)¹⁰, followed by Jews (30.7%) and Germans (7.0). There was also a limited number (0.3%) of other nationals: Russians, Ukrainians, Belarusians and Ruthenians. The respective communities lived in separate parts and districts of the city, in quite hermetic circles that were closed to others. The only space that brought together and enabled establishment of relations between the respective nationalities was the economy. In terms of religion in Łódź of the interwar period, the dominant denomination were Roman Catholics (56.2%), another numerous community were Judaists (33.4%), the third group were Protestants (9.2%), whereas Orthodox Christians and other denominations were scarce (0.6% and 0.3%, respectively)¹¹.

⁴ After 1906, there were two Catholic communities in Łódź, the Roman Catholic Church, traditional for the Polish culture, and the Mariavite Church that emerged from its structure in early 20th century. K. CHYLAK, *Z dziejów społeczności katolickich w Łodzi w czasie I wojny światowej*. [in:] *Operacja Łódzka. Zapomniany fakt I wojny światowej*, ed. J.A. DASZYŃSKA, Łódź 2011, p. 127.

⁵ W. PUŚ, *Zmiany liczebności i struktury narodowościowej ludności Łodzi do roku 1939*. [in:] *Wpływ wielonarodowego dziedzictwa kulturowego Łodzi na współczesne oblicze miasta*, ed. M. KOTER, M. KULESZA, W. PUŚ and S. PYTLAS, Łódź 2005, p. 17.

⁶ A. GOERNE, *Z zakresu statystyki m. Łodzi. Informator z kalendarzem na rok 1919*, Łódź [n.d.], p. 25.

⁷ J. JANCZAK, *Ludność Łodzi przemysłowej 1820-1914*, Acta Universitatis Lodziensis. Folia Historica 1982, no. 11, pp. 38–40.

⁸ A. GOERNE, op. cit.; E. ROSSET, *Łódź miasto pracy*, Łódź 1929, p. 22.

⁹ A. RZEPKOWSKI, *Ludność miasta Łodzi w latach 1918-1939*, Łódź 2008, p. 45. Within a decade, the population was 605,467 persons, in 1939, there were 672,138 residents in Łódź.

¹⁰ Ibidem, p. 110-112. Overall, in Poland, Polish nationals were also the most numerous (69.2%), followed by Ukrainians and Ruthenians (15.1%), Jews (7.9%) and Germans (2.9%).

¹¹ Ibidem, p. 117; J.K. JANCZAK, *Struktura narodowościowa Łodzi w latach 1820-1939*. [in:] W. PUŚ, S. LISZEWSKI, op. cit., pp. 51-52. According to the census of 1931, the dominant language among the Catholics

In terms of education and child care, the respective nations and religious communities had their own educational and care institutions for children, pupils, foster children or charges. It is worth noting that over the years, the beneficiaries remained the same, only the form of educational and child care activities changed. Before World War I, educational and child care institutions (not only in Łódź) were managed mainly by philanthropic and social-private organizations, whereas in the interwar period, they became the main element of the educational and social policy of the State and local governments. This is essential for the subject-matter of this article, because celebrations, customs and rituals in institutions before, during and after World War I were different.

In the back of a small room on the first floor was installed a beautiful, glowing Christmas tree, decorated with all sorts of lights and toys”¹²
(period until 1914)

Celebrations with child participation were, as has already been mentioned, organised in schools, pre-schools and nurseries, which were numerous at that time¹³. Those institutions provided education, upbringing and care for children in school and preschool age. The idea to create nurseries for children in the Kingdom of Poland was influenced by the social and economic needs of those times¹⁴. As a result of fast industrialisation of cities and urbanisation of industrial centres, the growing demand for cheap labour force (mainly women) and shift work implied the need to establish appropriate institutions for children whose parents worked in the industry, trade and metchandise. Another factor that contributed to the foundation of such facilities were the tsarist repressions in Poland (especially after the January Uprising), which motivated Polish communities to develop a system of secret education¹⁵.

was Polish (98.3%), among Evangelical Protestants – German (83.2%) and among Jews – Yiddish (87.5%). When comparing the denominational structure of respective language groups, one can see that of the persons declaring Polish to be their mother tongue, the vast majority were Catholics (93.5%), the Russian language – Orthodox Christians (79.5%), German language – Evangelical Protestants (87.2%) and Yiddish and Hebrew – Jews (99.90 and 99.99%, respectively). J. DZIECIUCHOWICZ, E. KLIMA, S. MORDWA, W. RETKIEWICZ, *Rola wyznań religijnych w kształtowaniu przestrzeni miejskiej Łodzi*, Łódź 2004, p. 21.

¹² „Gwiazdka” w *szkółce rzemiosł*, *Rozwój* 1903, no. 291, p. 2. Note: In Polish, the quotations have the original spelling, including mistakes, and punctuation.

¹³ Nurseries were for children aged 3 to 7 years and pre-schools for children aged 7 to 9 years; they provided elementary education. Nurseries and preschools were usually located in one building, in separate rooms, which is why source documents often lack precise definitions of the respective institutions; both names are used interchangeably. The activity of nurseries in the 19th/20th century is discussed by Stefania Walasek in her book: S. WALASEK, *Opieka i wychowanie małego dziecka na łamach czasopism przelomu XIX i XX wieku*, Wrocław 2015.

¹⁴ The first nursery in the Kingdom of Poland was founded in 1839 by the Warsaw Charity Society. See H. MARKIEWICZOWA, *Działalność opiekuńczo-wychowawcza Warszawskiego Towarzystwa Dobroczynności 1814-1914*, Warszawa 2002, p. 147.

¹⁵ B. SANDLER, *Wychowanie przedszkolne i kształcenie wychowawczyń w Królestwie Polskim*, Wrocław 1968, p. 68.

Apart from the child care and upbringing function, nurseries also played an economic role. In terms of upbringing, the most important was to teach children a sense of duty, obedience, diligence and religiousness. In industrial cities of the turn of the 19th century, there existed three types of nurseries: 1) philanthropic institutions (usually free of charge) managed by charity organisations and institutions, foundations, parishes, monasteries or private individuals; 2) “kindergartens”¹⁶ (the costs of a child’s attendance were paid by his parents) 3) factory nurseries (for the children of factory workers). Very often, nurseries were accompanied by elementary schools, in order to educate children (also in the patriotic spirit) and bridge educational gaps caused by negligence of the occupation authorities.

The nursery movement that developed in Łódź in the late 19th century was associated with the initiative of the social activists of the largest philanthropic organisation of those times, called the Christian Charity Society of Łódź (hereinafter: CCSL or the Society)¹⁷. The first nursery for pre-school children in the city was opened in 1889, followed by two more, at an interval of five years each, in 1894 and in 1899, respectively¹⁸. The purpose of the Society’s nurseries was mainly to take care of children from the working class, who spent most of the time home alone. It was assumed that they would be taught to work, keep order and live by moral principles from a young age¹⁹. Due to lack of school buildings and rooms, not enough urban primary schools and lack of places for children in schools, the authorities of the CCSL decided to establish elementary schools together with nurseries²⁰. One of the educational institutions managed by the Society was the Trade School, teaching specific vocations to boys aged 11 to 15 years. Thus, since the tsarist administration had no interest in teaching children and youth, the Łódź community established their own educational system comprised of private and factory schools, and schools managed by philanthropic societies and institutions engaged in the field of local education²¹.

¹⁶ The originator of “kindergartens”, i.e. educational institutions for children in pre-school age was Friedrich W.A. FRÖBEL (1782-1852), the German educator and author of the principles of pre-school education. B. MILERSKI, B. ŚLIWERSKI, op. cit., p. 70.

¹⁷ The CCSL was established in 1885. Its activity focused on adults and children in a difficult financial situation. The organisation established and managed several philanthropic institutions, of which 7 were dedicated for children and youth. More information about the topic: J. SOSNOWSKA, *Działalność socjalna i opiekuńczo-wychowawcza Łódzkiego Chrześcijańskiego Towarzystwa Dobroczynności (1885-1940)*, Łódź 2011.

¹⁸ The oldest institution for children in Łódź was the Nursery for Jewish Girls named after J. and A. Hertz. It accepted children aged from 5 to 13 years. W. PUŚ, *Żydzi w Łodzi w latach zaborów 1793-1914*, Łódź 2003, p. 188.

¹⁹ Before a nursery was officially opened, its statutes had to be approved by governorate authorities in Piotrków Trybunalski.

²⁰ According to Eugenia Podgórska, in 1897, 55% of male residents and 66% of female residents of Łódź were illiterate. Cf. E. PODGÓRSKA, *Rozwój oświaty w Łodzi do 1918 r.*, Łódź, 1973, p. 124. Another historian of Łódź education claims that before World War I, more than 50% of Łódź residents could neither write nor read. At that time, the statistics did not cover children of school age. It is estimated that more than 30 thousand children did not attend any classes. W. DEMBOWSKI, *Walka nauczycieli łódzkich o powszechne, obowiązkowe nauczanie u progu niepodległości*. [in:] *Z dziejów oświaty łódzkiej w XX wieku. Studia i szkice*, ed. M. BANDURKA, Łódź 1995, pp. 39-40; *Informator m. Łodzi*, Łódź 1920, p. 56.

²¹ M. KOTER, M. KULESZA, W. PUŚ, S. PYTLAS, *Wpływ wielonarodowego dziedzictwa kulturowego Łodzi na współczesne oblicze miasta*, Łódź 2005, pp. 77-89.

When analysing the activity of nurseries and elementary schools managed by the abovementioned Charity Society in the context of the topic of this article, it is worth discussing celebrations with children organised there. Some of the events, such as speeches, exhibitions, theatre performances – were addressed to adults, but with active child participation, and were supposed to raise funds for institutions, which, after all, depended on “public generosity”²². The community of the 1st Nursery of the CCSL organised the *May picnic* and garden games with the *fair and fortune baskets*, in the autumn – the *fruit fair*, and in the winter, with active participation of children – *nativity plays*²³. Outdoor events and games (usually held in parks) attracted especially children, although the organisers were more interested in adult visitors, hoping to raise substantial funds²⁴. Children were rather observers of the events and attractions, but sometimes they took part in competitions and lotteries, in which they could win toys or sweets. It should be noted that the success of those events depended to a large extent not on the teachers (then referred to as *wardens* or *kindergarteners*) but rather on the body of the educational institution concerned, i.e. the board or committee²⁵, made up of *protectors*. Protectors were women from rich bourgeoisie circles of Łódź, wives of physicians, engineers and merchants, themselves engaged in social work²⁶. The entrepreneurship (or lack of it) of the committee members influenced the success of nursery or school celebrations. Christmas parties, which initially were very impressive, lost their momentum in 1907, as the “protectors showed no interest in them” and, according to the source documentation of the 1st Nursery of the CCSL: “Christmas celebrations were limited to coffee, gingerbread, nuts and bread handed out to visitors”²⁷.

The abovementioned Christmas celebrations, organised in almost all educational and child care institutions for Christian children, had numerous functions²⁸. Apart from building a positive atmosphere between the institution and the community, they offered a chance to present children’s skills and, more importantly, the merits of members of the managerial bodies of those institutions, as well as their benefactors and donors, and Łódź “VIPs”.

²² In one of the Łódź journals, we read that: “On the 9th day of this month [January 1900], the Teachers Self-Help Association is organising a party with numerous attractions for children at the Concert Hall. The children party will be followed by dancing for adults”. *Zabawa dziecięca*, *Rozwój* 1900, no. 1, p. 3.

²³ National Archives in Łódź (hereinafter: NAL), the Christian Charity Society of Łódź (CCSL), file no. 181: Report Book of the 1st Nursery Committee 1897-1927.

²⁴ M. PIESTRZENIEWICZ, *Rozrywka łodzian na przełomie XIX i XX wieku*, Łódź 2010, p. 60.

²⁵ The boards and committees of philanthropic institutions acted as custodial and controlling bodies with extensive competencies: from hiring the employees of schools and nurseries to developing the curriculum.

²⁶ M. SIKORSKA-KOWALSKA, *Wizerunek kobiety łódzkiej przełomu XIX/XX wieku*, Łódź 2001, pp. 123-125; Cf. also J. SOSNOWSKA, *Działalność społeczna kobiet Łódzkiego Chrześcijańskiego Towarzystwa Dobroczynności w latach 1885-1918*. [in:] *Kobieta a patriotyzm. Konteksty historyczno-pedagogiczne XVI-XX wieku*, ed. E.J. KRYŃSKA, Ł. KALISZ and A. KONOPACKI, Białystok 2012, pp. 89-102.

²⁷ NAL, CCSL, file no. 181: Report Book of the 1st Nursery Committee...

²⁸ About the idea and symbolic of Christmas (and other Christian feasts): U. JANICKA-KRZYWDA, *Wyczaje, tradycje, obrzędy*, Kraków 2013, f. 116-126. Cf. also: J. MAISONNEUVE, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

The last aspect was highlighted in newspaper accounts of those celebrations, which carefully noted the names of the persons who attended and supported them. During this kind of meetings, children received gifts, usually food, clothes or shoes, which were the things that nursery pupils from poor working classes needed the most. Newspaper accounts related not so much children activity during those celebrations as the gifts they received. Still, an account of the 1903 Christmas party in the 1st Nursery and in the school²⁹, after mentioning the *Christmas presents*, provides a description of the “subjects” of the educational process: children, pupils and teachers: “Children, mostly from poor families, seeing the glowing Christmas tree, joyfully sang Christmas carols and recited poems, and they did it so skilfully and well that the committee and the teachers deserve honest appreciation for their work”. The author of the article hopes that “the children will long remember the solemn moment”³⁰.

Another example showing that the focus of attention was on an event in institutional space rather than on its most important participants, that is children, is the record of the Christmas party at the 2nd Nursery and elementary school of the CCSL. The institution was attended by Christian children of the Evangelical and Roman Catholic denominations³¹. The Christmas party was held on 22 December 1899, on 2 p.m., with the participation of members of the Nursery committee, representatives of the Society’s board and Evangelical and Catholic church authorities. “Around the brilliantly lit Christmas tree – we read in the local newspaper – gathered 458 pupils. They joyfully announced the arrival of Christmas through songs and poems”³². Then, “speeches were given, in the German branch [of the nursery and school] by Pastor Angerstein, and in the Polish branch – by Priest Zacharjasiewicz. They spoke cordially about the significance of the celebration, which was followed by presentation of gifts: books with pictures, gingerbread cakes, nuts, etc. The day before, apples were distributed and 200 poorest children received warm clothes”³³. Next, the article says that the board of the Charity Society could organise the event thanks to numerous donations (in money and in kind), and it lists the names of about 60 companies and individuals who supported the event³⁴. A description of another Christmas party in 1900, at the 3rd Nursery of the CCSL, also accentuates the amounts of donations and lists the names of benefactors (including one M. Rosicki, who donated

²⁹ In the years from 1899 to 1906, the number of children, girls and boys aged 3 to 7 years, ranged between 550 and 640. Between 1904 and 1912, the average number of children aged 7 to 14 years attending the elementary school was 200. J. SOSNOWSKA, *Działalność socjalna...*, op. cit., p. 230.

³⁰ *Z pierwszej ochronki*, *Rozwój* 1903, no. 291, p. 2.

³¹ The number of children attending the 2nd nursery of the CCSL was 450 in the year 1900, 570 three years later and 600 in 1912. In the year 1911, Evangelical Protestants represented 66% of all the pupils in the institution. J. SOSNOWSKA, *Działalność socjalna...*, op. cit., p. 248.

³² *Od Ochronki II*, *Rozwój* 1900, no. 2, p. 2.

³³ *Ibidem*.

³⁴ The newspaper mentions, among others, Anna Scheibler (150 rubles), M. Pfennig (5 rb), Towarzystwo Akcyjne Ludwika Geyera (10 pieces of fustian – cotton and linen fabric), P. Dauber (6 dresses, 4 pairs of stockings, 1 pair of gloves, nuts, apples), anonymous donor (toys). *Ibidem*.

a donkey for the nativity play)³⁵. Reports of the celebrations held in the above institutions do not mention the attendance of parents.

A more subject-oriented character of a Christmas meeting in educational space is presented in an account by a journalist who, supposedly, attended celebrations at the Charity Society Trade School³⁶. Traditional Christmas parties were held there every year, but on 20 December 1903, “not only the committee members and protectors arrived, but also many persons interested in the institute’s affairs; among the attendants of yesterday’s celebration, we noticed a large group of the working class. In the back of a small room on the first floor, was installed a beautiful, glowing Christmas tree, decorated with all sorts of lights and toys. Here and there, tables arranged along the walls were covered with numerous Christmas presents, such as clothes, shoes, nuts, cakes, sweets, etc.”³⁷. Next, the author describes the meeting itself: “The party started with Christmas carols sung by pupils. Then, a few boys recited poems in Polish and German, and quite well, too, which shows the progress pupils make at school. Reverend Karol Szmidel spoke cordially to the boys about the significance of the festival and encouraged them to keep working and be always grateful to their benefactors”³⁸. The meeting ended with the giving of presents.

“(…) the history talk made a particularly nice impression”³⁹
(World War I period)

The outbreak of World War I and the political and military events accompanying the war restored the hope for independence in many Polish people. The prospect of recovering freedom and an independent State seemed very close at hand. In such context, the society – also that of multinational Łódź – undertook numerous social, educational and economic projects so as to enter into the new historical period with independently achieved background⁴⁰.

³⁵ *Z III Ochronki*, *Rozwój* 1900, no. 282, p. 2.

³⁶ In 1903, the Trade School established with the financial support of local businessmen, physicians and journalists was attended by 172 boys in four classes (the 1st grade had two classes, the 2nd and 3rd grades – one class each). In the school’s workshops, pupils learned the professions of the locksmith, blacksmith, spinner and weaver. J. SOSNOWSKA, *Spoleczno-wychowawcza działalność Szkoły Rzemiosł w Łodzi w latach 1900-1922*. [in:] *Szkoła polska od średniowiecza do XX wieku. Między tradycją a innowacją*, ed. I. SZYBIAK, A. FIJAŁKOWSKI and J. KAMIŃSKA, Warszawa 2010, p. 296, 304-306.

³⁷ “*Gwiazdka*” w *szkółce rzemiosł*, *Rozwój* 1903, no. 291, p. 2.

³⁸ *Ibidem*.

³⁹ NAL, the Central Civic Committee of Łódź (CCC), file no. 177: Reports of the School Section of the Civic Committee 1914-1915, c. 149-153 Report no. 43 of 17 VI 1915.

⁴⁰ In the Kingdom of Poland, people (not only Polish nationals) started associating in various groups and institutions of social and professional, philanthropic and religious nature immediately after the revolutionary events of the years from 1905 to 1907. The tsarist manifesto of 17/30 October 1905 granted, among other things “firm civic freedoms based on actual personal integrity and freedom of conscience, speech, association and assembly”. Liberalisation of the law resulted in the foundation of a great number of associations, also education-

In 1915, the Russian army left Łódź, only to be replaced by German occupation, which lasted until the end of World War I⁴¹. Despite a battle in the suburbs of Łódź in late November and early December of 1914⁴², the city was not destroyed, although it suffered major economic, demographic and social damage⁴³.

During the early stage of the war (VIII 1914 – VI 1915), life in the city was governed by two social and philanthropic organisations: a temporary body of the local government – the Central Civic Committee (CCC) and the Civic Committee for the Poor (CCP)⁴⁴. Although its members included the bourgeoisie, there were also quite a few social activists (of different nationalities, religious denominations and professions), who saw the war as an opportunity to change the political and social situation and strived to make this change possible, and as a result – regain independence. The efforts to organise the social and civic life in Łódź (especially in the area of education⁴⁵), despite the difficult time of the war, lack of supplies, many contagious diseases, hunger, lack of heating materials, medications or places to live, did not grow weak, even after termination of the abovementioned CCC and CCP committees. Their duties were assumed by organisations created by the German administration. The School Delegation of the Magistrate of Łódź proposed in November 1917 universal, compulsory 7-year education (which was introduced in the interwar period)⁴⁶.

al, in Łódź. Nonetheless, the city was still ruled by tsarist Russia. It was only the outbreak of World War I that gave new hope for freedom. S. KALABIŃSKI, F. TYCH, *Rewolucja 1905-1907 w Królestwie Polskim i na Białostocczyźnie. Okres najwyższego nasilenia walk rewolucyjnych, jesień–zima 1905 r.* [in:] *Historia Polski*. T. 3, 1850/1864-1918, p. 2, 1900-1914, ed. Ż. KORMANOWA and W. NAJDUS, Warszawa 1972, p. 400.

⁴¹ M. HERTZ, *Łódź w czasie Wielkiej Wojny*, Łódź 1933, pp. 1-7.

⁴² In late November and early December 1914, a bitter manoeuvre battle was fought in the area of the current Łódź voivodeship, called the “Łódź operation”, and Łódź fell into the very centre of the Eastern front line. Poland was during World War I the field of the Eastern front (due to the geographic location), and Łódź, located in the part of Poland annexed by Russia, was a major industrial centre and transport hub. Along the front line extending from Włocławek and Kutno to Radomsko, more than 600,000 Russian, German and Austrian soldiers went to battle. Cf. M. JAGIEŁŁO, *Armia, która została na zawsze*. [in:] *Operacja Łódzka. Zapomniany fakt I wojny światowej*, ed. J.A. DASZYŃSKA, Łódź 2011, p. 58; J.A. DASZYŃSKA, *Łódź między pokojem a wojną*. [in:] *Łódź w czasie Wielkiej Wojny*, ed. J.A. DASZYŃSKA, Łódź 2012, pp. 31-42.

⁴³ W. BORTNOWSKI, *Ziemia łódzka w ogniu*, Łódź 1969, pp. 66-73; W. PUŚ, K. BADZIAK, *Gospodarka Łodzi w okresie kapitalistycznym (do 1918 r.)*. [in:] *Łódź. Dzieje miasta. Tom I, Do 1918 r.*, ed. R. ROSIN, Warszawa – Łódź 1980. p. 297; K.R. KOWALCZYŃSKI, *Łódź 1914. Kronika oblężonego miasta*, Łódź 2010, p. 22-40.

⁴⁴ The CCC was terminated after only one year of operation (in July 1915), and urban management was assumed by the new Magistrate. Also the CCP was liquidated and replaced by the Delegation (later the Department) for the Poor, which served the inhabitants of the city until November 1918. M. JASKULSKI, *Władze administracyjne Łodzi do 1939 roku*, Łódź 2001, p. 93.

⁴⁵ Z. MARCINIAK, *Sprawa upowszechnienia nauczania początkowego w Królestwie Polskim. Sierpień 1914–sierpień 1917*, Wrocław – Warszawa – Kraków 1962, p. 8.

⁴⁶ P. SMOLIK, *Dziesięć lat działalności oświatowej i kulturalnej Samorządu Łódzkiego*, Łódź 1929, p. 4; *Księga pamiątkowa dziesięciolecia samorządu miasta Łodzi 1919-1929*, Łódź 1930, pp. 123-124; W. LIPIEC, *Kultura i oświata w Łodzi w okresie międzywojennym*, Łódź 1973, p. 5, 14; W. DEMBOWSKI, op. cit., pp. 40-41.

German occupation authorities, in order to win the favour of Polish people for their own purposes, allowed a certain degree of freedom. Polish schools were founded, manifestations to celebrate national anniversaries were organised and the abovementioned local government structures with the participation of the Polish society were established. One of such bodies, within CCC, responsible for education in Łódź, was the School Section established in November 1914. Most of the initiators and members of the School Section came from the educational circles – they were headmasters/school managers and teachers⁴⁷. The most important of their numerous concepts concerned development of elementary education – different for the respective nations and religions. It is worth noting that elementary education in Łódź at the beginning of World War I was provided in schools for Polish, German, Jewish, Russian and Mariavite children. The schools were governed by municipal authorities (public schools), private individuals (private schools), company boards (factory schools), boards of social and philanthropic organisations (community schools) and Jewish qahals (cheders). The CCC School Section supervised only elementary education in the city (it tried to reopen schools that were closed because of the war and bring to life new institutions)⁴⁸.

Intensive efforts to reduce illiteracy in Łódź started at the beginning of the year 1915. Reading and writing courses were organised for children who could not read or write (literacy courses)⁴⁹. They were organised in schools that existed before and were founded early into World War I.

In the light of the topic of this article, the author presents the custom of graduation celebrations in literacy courses (which does not mean that festivals were not celebrated in institutions during World War I⁵⁰). It is worth noting that an identical custom existed in

⁴⁷ In May 1915, members of the School Section were: Stanisław Silberstein, Waclaw Kloss, Stanisław Zieliński, Jan Stypułkowski, Jan Czeraszewicz, pastor Paweł Hadrian, Bronisław Handelsman, PhD, Leon Hirsberg, Bronisław Knothe, Antoni Lipski, Count Marian Manteuffel, Edmund Pfeifer, Józef Radwański, Rev. Bronisław Siennicki, Kazimierz Tomaszewski, Roman Tulin, Franciszek Winnicki, Józef Witkowski, engineer and Roman Wybranowski, engineer. NAL, CCC, file no. 176: School Section. Organisational affairs 1914-1915, c. 20-23 CCC letters on the appointment of the School Commission (VIII 1914); c. 63 Members of the School Section.

⁴⁸ It is hard to give the precise number of elementary schools in Łódź at that time, as both the sources and the literature present different data. According to the “Statistical Yearbook of Łódź” of 1923, before the outbreak of the war, in March 1914, the city governed 101 elementary schools with the total of 313 grades and 15,330 students. *Rocznik Statystyczny m. Łodzi, Łódź 1923*, p. 114. According to archival data concerning the year 1913 (referred to back then as “normal time”) and the 1914/1915 school year (the “wartime term”), the number of elementary schools went down from 74 to 68, and the number of grades – from 256 to 221. NAL, CCC, file no. 176: School section..., c. 62 Number of schools and expenditure on schools.

⁴⁹ NAL, CCC, file no. 177: School Section Reports..., c. 6 Report no. 5 of 10 XII 1914. Literacy courses were also organised for young adults and adults.

⁵⁰ Religious feasts were usually an opportunity to provide children with more nutritious food and clothes. For example, in the parish nursery of an Evangelical community (in the St John’s Evangelical parish) on the Holy Thursday of 1917, children received, apart from the normal daily meal, an egg and a croissant. For Easter, they took home with them 1/4 pound of *strudel* and a small sausage. On Christmas, every child received clothes (a shirt, underwear, suit or dress, stockings, clogs, apron; girls received hair ribbons and handkerchiefs, some of them also head scarfs) and food (a two-pound loaf of bread, gingerbread cakes and pears). Before Christmas in 1917, a Christmas play was organised with the participation of children and their families (mainly mothers).

elementary schools in Łódź to celebrate the end of the school year. According to source documentation and newspaper articles, on those occasions, members of the School Section focused on a child as a pupil – he was an important subject of the educational process and his knowledge and skills were assessed. Also the educational work of teachers was reviewed. Teachers were judged on the basis of the achievements presented by children during an official *show*⁵¹. Parents of pupils also attended course graduation celebrations.

The first edition of the literacy course for children, which lasted for three months and was free of charge, was opened by the School Section in January 1915 and ended in the first decade of April, and members of the School Section declared that its educational effects were “in general unexpectedly exceptional”⁵². The end of the course was also an opportunity to celebrate a graduation ceremony. Its initiator and moderator was Józef Radwanski, the headmaster of one of the schools in Łódź. All the children who graduated from the literacy course were supposed to write their names on a special commemorative card and each graduate was to receive a book as present (to this end, members of the Section “started collecting popular books, suitable for a child’s mind”)⁵³. Also, the need for children libraries was discussed in order to continue the education gained in the literacy courses, because children after those courses “could not be left alone, because the work done by the Section would then be wasted [...]. They should be sent to a library, as a continuation of their education, which should be provided for by the School Section”⁵⁴.

The graduation ceremony, the abovementioned *show*, attended by representatives of the CCC, the School Section and parents of the pupils, took place on Saturday, 10 April 1915, in the premises of the Christian Labourer Association (the People’s House at 34 Przejazd Street)⁵⁵. Before the ceremony, on 9:30 a.m., children attended a service at the nearby Roman Catholic church of the Holy Cross. The agenda of the ceremony, designed by J. Radwański, said that in the first part, children would be divided into groups and would attend religious, ethical, historic and environmental talks and a reading, reciting and arithmetic exam, and in the second part – children’s notebooks would be presented “to demonstrate the results of three months of reading and writing classes”⁵⁶. The celebration opened with a recitation of the poem “The Polish school”, and closed with solemn sing-

The donations collected for that purpose by the Committee made it possible to provide every child with clothes (a dress or suit, apron, scarf, shirt, underwear, stockings and clogs) and even a toy, which “triggered great joy among them”. NAL, Łódź records (NAL), Social Welfare Department (SWD), file no. 18519: Reports of the Local Welfare Council of Łódź 1917, c. 192-195 1st Nursery at St. John’s Parish.

⁵¹ *School shows*, which were a kind of an examination, were supposed to present the results of the work of pupils (and their teachers), and if children had made progress, especially in reading and writing skills, they could move up to a higher grade. E. PODGÓRSKA, *Szkolnictwo elementarne w Łodzi w latach 1808-1914*, Łódź 1966, p. 42.

⁵² NAL, CCC, file no. 177: Reports of the School Section ..., c. 60-65 Report no. 26 of 30 III 1915.

⁵³ Ibidem, c. 51-56 Report no. 24 of 18 III 1915; c. 57-58 Report no. 25 of 23 III 1915.

⁵⁴ Ibidem, c. 57-58 Report no. 25 of 23 III 1915.

⁵⁵ *Popis*, Gazeta Łódzka 1915, no. 84, p. 3.

⁵⁶ NAL, CCC, file no. 177: Reports of the School Section ..., c. 60-65 Report no. 26 of 30 III 1915.

ing. The poem was followed by two speeches: the first – by J. Radwański, addressed to the children, and the second – to the parents, given by a member of the School Section and headmaster of one of the Schools in Łódź – Waclaw Kloss and representative of the CCC, Wolczyński⁵⁷. The event was reported in local newspapers, and it was noted that the graduates “(...) could read fluently and with comprehension, knew the history and geography of their homeland and the necessary information about the environment...”⁵⁸

A somewhat less optimistic review of the *show* was formulated by one of the speakers – W. Kloss. During the School Section meeting in June 1915, he criticised one of the elements of the pupil’s presentation – the talk, and in particular “children’s choral answers”⁵⁹. He claimed that “from the educational perspective, the talk had no advantages” and that it was “propaganda”⁶⁰. Another member – P. Pfeiffer, believed that “recitations were unnecessary, because they did not show to the audience whether or not the children had learned to read”⁶¹. On the other hand, yet another member of the Section – Franciszek Winnicki, noticed some advantages of the show. In his opinion, “the talk about history was exceptionally pleasant. Children, and even the community, attending the show, could see what a school, controlled by the community, was capable of. The teachers could see that their work was controlled not only by the School Section, but also by the community. This will encourage the teachers to work hard with children”⁶². The discussion during the abovementioned School Section meeting was about the purposefulness of organising *shows* at the end of the school year in elementary schools and at the end of the second edition of literacy courses for children⁶³. Finally, despite negative comments, it was decided to continue with a similar form of pupil presentation – preceded by a solemn service in the church, and enriched with “appropriate speeches”⁶⁴.

⁵⁷ NAL, CCC, file no. 194: School Section – literacy courses for adults and children 1915, c. 60 Agenda of the literacy course show, 10 April 1915.

⁵⁸ *Popis analfabetów*, Nowy Kurjer Łódzki, 1915, no. 99, p. 2.

⁵⁹ NAL, CCC, file no. 177: Reports of the School Section ..., c. 149-153 Report no. 43 of 17 VI 1915.

⁶⁰ The “propaganda character” meant the idea of independence being conveyed. Despite the war and occupation, elementary schools for Polish children taught the history of Poland and the geography “of the homeland”. During another meeting, members of the School Section complained about gaps in teacher training: not all teacher “had thorough knowledge of either the grammar of their mother tongue or the history of their country”. Ibidem, c. 154-158 Report no. 44 of 28 VI 1915.

⁶¹ Ibidem.

⁶² Ibidem, c. 149-153 Report no. 43 of 17 VI 1915.

⁶³ The School Section started the second, free of charge literacy course for children immediately after completion of the first edition. On the day of the *show* (10 IV 1915), a local newspaper published the following advertisement: “Children who are eager to learn but cannot read or write are asked to enroll in one of the schools [a list of schools follows]. Older children, in any case no younger than 9 years, will be given priority.” *Szkola bezpłatna dla analfabetów*, Gazeta Łódzka 1915, no. 94, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Ibidem.

In a small but nice leisure room, decorated with beautiful papercuts made by children from the Child Care House, a portable stage was installed...⁶⁵
(the times of the II Republic of Poland)

The post-war reality and the independence regained by Poland in 1918 did not eliminate many of the political, administrative, social or educational problems that the new national and local authorities had to deal with. The main challenge that the young Polish State faced was to create a homogenous national body out of the lands formerly annexed by Russia, Prussia and Austria. Even though the legislative authority focused on political and legal matters, it does not mean to say that important social issues were neglected. Child care and educational projects which, before World War I, were the domain of the philanthropy, that is charity institutions and the private sector, in the interwar period were gradually assumed, based on relevant legislation, by the national and local government administration. The same was the case in Łódź, where the priority of the municipal government, apart from introducing common compulsory education, was to provide care for children and their mothers.

The projects and concepts of the municipal authorities of Łódź were put into practice through the City Hall's respective agendas (since 1919, it was the Board of Łódź, and since 1933 – the Municipal Board). In the period from 1919 to 1939, three municipal organisational units were responsible for child care and education: The Department of Education and Culture, the Social Welfare Department and the Public Health Department⁶⁶.

Establishment of the Social Welfare Department (hereinafter: SWD)⁶⁷ in April 1920 was a milestone in the welfare policy of the city's young government, and it was in line with the new national policy in this respect. According to Tadeusz Wisławski, one of the presidents of the SWD, the Social Welfare Department was given by the municipal authorities of Łódź "one of the first places in general duties of the local government economy", the most important of them being child care, "which became the main slogan of the welfare policy of the Local Government of Łódź"⁶⁸. Establishment of the SWD coincided with a specific action – in April 1920, the Board of Łódź, in association with the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, founded the Shelter for Children⁶⁹.

⁶⁵ *Popis w domu wychowawczym*, Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi 1923, no. 48, p. 15.

⁶⁶ *Księga pamiątkowa...*, op. cit., pp. 56-58.

⁶⁷ For more information about the activity of the Social Welfare Department of the Board of Łódź, see: A. BOŁDYREW, J. SOSNOWSKA, *Troska o dziecko i jego potrzeby w działaniach Wydziału Opieki Społecznej Zarządu Miasta Łodzi w okresie międzywojennym*, Kultura i Wychowanie 2014, no. 8, pp. 21-34.

⁶⁸ T. WISŁAWSKI, *Samorządowa Opieka Społeczna w Łodzi*, Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi 1927, no. 16, p. 25. Cf also: J. SOSNOWSKA, *Problemy oświaty, wychowania i opieki nad dzieckiem na łamach „Dziennika Zarządu miasta Łodzi” (1919-1939)*. [in:] *Addenda do dziejów oświaty. Z badań nad prasą Drugiej Rzeczypospolitej*, ed. I. MICHALSKA and G. MICHALSKI, Łódź 2013, pp. 225-246.

⁶⁹ *W sprawie otwarcia w Łodzi Pogotowia Opiekuńczego dla dzieci*, Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi 1920, no. 19, p. 5. The shelter was for children of the streets, who were brought there by the police or local people. It was supposed to be a place of temporary stay for them, but the institution was always overcrowded.

It is worth noting that the establishment of the SWD as a unit of the municipal authorities of Łódź preceded the postulates of the Social Welfare Law of 1923, the publication and implementation of which intensified the measures undertaken by the State and local governments to provide care for adults and children⁷⁰. The scope and methods of operation of the SWD were legally governed by the *Organisational Statutes of the Social Welfare Department of Łódź City Hall* approved by the resolution of the City Council on 7 June 1925⁷¹. The duties of the SWD in the area of child and family care, according to the provisions of the Social Welfare Law, was to look after infants, children and youth (especially orphans, half-orphans, neglected and abandoned children, juvenile delinquents and children endangered by bad influences) and to protect motherhood⁷², and its activities focused on: 1) providing for the basic sustenance of persons who were permanently or temporarily unable to make their own living – so-called out-house care; 2) establishing and managing care institutions; and 3) religious, ethical, intellectual and physical education of children and professional training of youth – under so-called in-house care⁷³.

In mid 1920s, the Board of Łódź managed 9 care and educational institutions for children and youth with around 575 charges; these institutions were: the abovementioned Care Shelter and 5 municipal child care houses, 2 municipal dormitories (for girls and boys) and the Hostel for Boys at the Special School no. 78⁷⁴.

The author presents two categories of celebrations held for and with the charges in child care houses. The first were traditional Christmas parties and the second – also religious in nature – were meetings with Church and municipal authorities on the occasion of chapel consecration in those houses.

Christmas celebrations in municipal child care institutions, which were like houses for the charges, had a certain fixed rhythm. According to an analysis of a newsletter of the Łódź local government, the core of all the meetings was the participation of representatives of the local government, with the city mayor himself. The purpose of publishing information about the event in the local press was to recognise (and acknowledge) the role of municipal authorities in the field of social welfare, among other things, the fact that representatives of the local government looked after children who did not have sufficient parental care.

Annual celebrations in child care houses took place on Christmas eve, the 24th of December, at around 1 o'clock p.m., and had the following pattern: listening to Christmas

⁷⁰ Ustawa z dnia 16 sierpnia 1923 r. o opiece społecznej, Dz.U.RP 1923, no. 92, item 726.

⁷¹ Protokół 17 (III sesji) posiedzenia Rady Miejskiej, dnia 7 czerwca 1925 r. (1925), Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi, no. 31, item 8.

⁷² Statut Organizacyjny Wydziału Opieki Społecznej Magistratu m. Łodzi, Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi 1925, no. 31, p. 8.

⁷³ The SWD appointed two agendas to implement its statutory duties: In-House Care Division and Out-House Care Division. In 1925, the In-House Care Division was rearranged into the Out-House and Semi In-House Care Division.

⁷⁴ T. WISŁAWSKI, op. cit., p. 29. A few years later, the number of institutions managed by the SWD reduced, mainly due to the economic crisis of the 1930s and the need to cut down municipal costs. Cf. also: N. STOLIŃSKA-POBRALSKA, *Instytucje opieki nad dzieckiem w międzywojennej Łodzi*, Łódź 2002, pp. 117-122.

carols (sung by children), the *show* (recitations and dances by children), speeches by the mayor (or another representative of the local government), Christmas wafer sharing with the charges and personnel of the institution, Christmas wishes, dinner, a talk about Christmas (children would usually sit by the Christmas tree then), giving out sweets to children and parting with the guests.

During the Christmas parties in child care houses in 1924, the local government of Łódź was represented by: Mayor Marian Cynarski, Deputy Mayors Waclaw Wojewódzki and Wiktor Groszkowski, and representatives, respectively, of the Social Welfare Department – Władysław Adamski and of the Education and Culture Department – Zdzisław Hajkowski. “After sharing the Christmas wafer with the children and personnel, and wishing Merry Christmas – we read in the *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi* journal – representatives of the presidium gathered at the table for dinner. After the meal, the beautifully decorated Christmas trees were lit and the charges of the Child Care House received presents: apples, candies and nuts. Next, Christmas carols were sung”⁷⁵.

The next year, the number and names of the persons visiting the respective institutions on Christmas did not change. The newsletter said that in all the municipal child care houses, Christmas dinner was organised thanks to the efforts of the Social Welfare Department personnel. In December 1925, too, “after a brief and cordial speech by Mayor Cynarski and sharing the Christmas wafer with the children and personnel, everybody sat at the table for dinner. During the meal, the children sat under the beautifully decorated Christmas tree and talked about Christmas”⁷⁶. In the other child care houses visited by representatives of the municipal authorities, the celebrations were similar (in the 3rd Child Care House at 51 Kopernika Street, the children sang Christmas carols to the accompaniment of the piano). According to an analysis of newspapers, municipal authorities also spent “nice moments by beautifully decorated and brightly lit Christmas trees” in child care houses on the Christmas Eve of 1926.⁷⁷

It is worth noting that holiday visits of the representatives of municipal authorities in the care and educational institutions under their control also served as inspection visits (this term was even used in the newsletter). This is how religious events were celebrated in institutional space by representatives of the authorities⁷⁸.

⁷⁵ Respective representatives of the city visited different institutions: Mayor M. Cynarski – two Child Care Houses: one at 51 Szosa Karolewska Street and at 51 Kopernika Street; Deputy Mayor W. Wojewódzki and President of the SWD, W. Adamski – the Care House for young tradesmen at 10a Cmentarna Street and the Dormitory for Girls at 92 Piotrkowska Street; the Deputy Mayor W. Groszkowski – the Municipal Child Care House at 25/27 Wiznera Street; the President of the Education and Culture Department, Z. Hajkowski – Hostel for Morally Neglected Boys. *Wigilia w Miejskich Domach Wychowawczych*, *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi* 1924, no. 2, p. 12.

⁷⁶ *Wieczery wigilijne w Miejskich Domach Wychowawczych*, *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi* 1925, no. 1, p. 23.

⁷⁷ *Wigilia w Miejskich Domach Wychowawczych*, *Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi* 1926, no. 1, pp. 11-12.

⁷⁸ In the period from 1923 to 1927, Łódź was governed by centrist and rightist parties. After the elections, the most important positions in the local government were taken by the National Democracy, Christian Democracy and National Labour Party. The National Democracy had the Mayor (M. Cynarski) and the alderman,

There was one more type of celebrations participated by children from child care houses. Another opportunity for a meeting of children, personnel, local authorities and the Roman Catholic Church was the consecration of chapels in child care houses. It was accompanied by the First Communion of children. The ceremony that took place in the 2nd Child Care House on the Sunday of 20 January 1924, at 9 a.m. was organised at the initiative of the SWD. The local government was represented on this occasion by Mayor M. Cynarski and members of the SWD, with W. Adamski as their leader. The Roman Catholic Church was represented by Bishop Wincenty Tymieniecki, who, assisted by a member of the Municipal Council, D. Kaczyński, consecrated the chapel (dedicated to Saint Michael the Archangel)⁷⁹. Next, the Bishop gave “a brief and cordial speech and offered a beautiful chalice for the Chapel, and the Holy Mass was celebrated, with the First Communion of 49 children”⁸⁰. Another chapel was consecrated in the 4th Child Care House on 25/27 Wiznera Street on the first day of Christmas 1926. During the Holy Mass celebrated by Bishop W. Tymieniecki, “children from the Child Care House sang religious songs; after the service, His Excellency the Bishop gave a speech”⁸¹. The municipal authorities were represented by two persons on this occasion.

Somewhat different in nature, although also participated by representatives of local authorities, were school *shows*, on which pupils presented the knowledge and skills they had gained. Accounts of such celebrations, which undoubtedly were important events for children, focused on the formula of the shows and emphasised the participation, engagement and effort of children. Also, the work of the teachers was acknowledged. The short accounts of those celebrations shed light on both the kinds of school activities for children and the educational work of teachers in those times. They show the impact of innovative educational methods rooted in the slogans and ideas of the “New Education”⁸².

and the other two parties – three aldermen and one Deputy Mayor each (W. Wojewódzki and W. Groszkowski). In the field of education and culture, representatives of those parties combined nationalist ideas with cultivation of traditions. According to Maria Nartowicz-Kot, the municipal cultural policy focused on religious and nationalist education. The cultural content was traditional and clerical, constituting a social model of a “Pole-Catholic”, in which elements of nationalist attitude dominated over clericalism. M. NARTONOWICZ-KOT, *Samorząd łódzki wobec problemów kultury w latach 1919-1939*, Acta Universitatis Lodzianis, Folia Historica 1985, no. 21, pp. 6-7.

⁷⁹ *Poświęcenie Kaplicy w II-gim Miejskim Domu Wychowawczym*, Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi 1924, no. 4, p. 14.

⁸⁰ *Ibidem*.

⁸¹ *Poświęcenie kaplicy w IV Domu Wychowawczym*, Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi 1926, no. 2, p. 12.

⁸² The “New Education” – a reformatory educational movement, which developed in the 1st half of the 20th century in Europe, aimed at reforming the school and the teaching material and methods. It was started by J. Dewey in the USA (where it was called the Progressive Education). The “New Education” was a reaction to the rigidity and exorbitant didactical intellectualism and formalism of the traditional school. Representatives of this movement believed that a child should become the subject of education and upbringing and that the process should take into account the mentality and individual needs and interests of a child, relate to his activity and enable his creativity. The main representatives: E. Claparède, O. Decroly, M. Montessori, G. Kerschensteiner, A. Ferrière, C. Freinet; in Poland – H. Rowid and J. Korczak. Cf. B. MILERSKI, B. ŚLIWERSKI, *op. cit.*, p. 135.

An example is the “quarterly pupil show” that took place in November 1923 in the Municipal Child Care House for trachoma (eye disease) patients⁸³. The event consisted of a few parts: artistic performances, gymnastic shows and exhibition of handiwork. The show was organised “in a small but nice leisure room, decorated with beautiful papercuts made by pupils”, with “a portable stage on which the children very skilfully performed a short play entitled ‘For a Child to be Happy’”⁸⁴. The second part consisted of choral singing, recitations and dances, and the *show* ended with a few gymnastic exercises with ribbons. The guests also examined with interest the exhibition of children’s handiwork, such as shoes, *thread buttons*, napkins, *blotting paper flowers*, drawings, papercuts. According to the audience, “both the show and the exhibition prove that the personnel of the Child Care House understand their duties very well and that their educational effort with ill children is fruitful”⁸⁵.

Similar was the formula of the half-term *show* in the Municipal Care House for Boys at 10a Cmentarna Street organised in the afternoon on 16 February 1924. The show consisted of: “declamations, performance about the Great War and a show by the school orchestra. The boys performed very well, especially the play, which was heartily applauded”⁸⁶. The *show* was followed by a dancing party with guests. The municipal authorities were represented by the SWD officials, with W. Adamski as their leader.

The school celebrations, customs and rituals organised in educational and child care institutions in Łódź in the 19th/20th century presented, in a very selective way, in this article, lead to some conclusions.

In all the historical periods analysed herein, regardless of the institution (a nursery, school, child care house) were organised some kind of religious celebrations associated with Christmas or Easter, i.e. the Christian tradition. Also, the end of term was celebrated with a *show* every year (sometimes twice or three times a year) in educational and child care facilities. Another kind of celebration were consecrations of religious places or Holy Masses in public institutions. This was associated with the specific political and social situation of the city in the given historical period. It is also worth noting that the formula of school celebrations depended on the events taking place across Poland. The cult of heroes and leaders of the Polish State was developed: Józef Piłsudski and Ignacy Mościcki, whose name days were feasts accompanied by solemn church services and academies in nurseries and schools, reported in newspapers (this aspect was omitted in the article).

⁸³ The municipal authorities were represented by the SWD officials: W. Adamski and T. Wisławski.

⁸⁴ *Popis w domu wychowawczym*, Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi 1923, no. 48, p. 15.

⁸⁵ *Ibidem*.

⁸⁶ *Popis w Miejskim Domu Wychowawczym*, Dziennik Zarządu Miasta Łodzi 1924, no. 10, p. 14.

In each of the historical periods discussed, celebrations were an opportunity to present – apart from children and teachers, who were the subjects directly associated with a given educational and care institution – also its indirect stakeholders, important for the local community: the donors, protectors, representatives of the managing authorities, local establishment and church authorities. According to source materials, those figures even “overshadowed” the most important – from the perspective of education – participants of the solemn celebrations.

It is worth noting the characteristics of the celebrations and events in institutional space. In the case of Christmas, it was always a “brightly lit Christmas tree” and presents – so important for children, which were given to them also on other occasions. The charges of the institutions discussed in the article were usually poor children, orphans or half-orphans who needed help and support, so the gifts they received were usually personal items, such as: shoes, clothes, fabric for clothes and food (which was very important during World War I).

It is quite hard to give an explicit answer to the questions asked in the title and in the article. In fact, none of the school celebrations, in the broad meaning of the term, could take place without the participation of children/pupils and their teachers/carers, so the very idea of an official meeting in the institutional space required the presence and activity of the charges. However an analysis of source materials (archives, newspaper articles) suggests that children and pupils were depersonalised (especially in records from before 1914), as may be seen from the fragments describing celebrations presented and highlighted in this article. In source materials, the child is focused on as a participant of the educational process and celebrations during World War I and later in the interwar period. Undoubtedly, this was on the one hand the narration used by the authors of reports but, on the other hand, increasing social awareness of the process of education and upbringing of children. From the historical perspective, having access only to source materials in the form of documents (reports, official letters, statistics) or newspaper articles, it is hard to assume that the child was only the “object” of official meetings and events or the “background” of visits and ceremonies. In this context, the quotation given at the beginning of the article becomes meaningful: „To perform a ritual is one thing, but to observe and study it – is another thing”⁸⁷.

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⁸⁷ J. MAISONNEUVE, op. cit., p. 7.

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