

*The Life of Women in the Industrial Lodz in 1908–1914 – selected aspects*

Polish historiography lacks the monograph concerning the life of women in Lodz between Revolution of 1905 and I World War. It was the reason why I decided to study that problem. What is more, I have always been interested in women studies and I have already written some articles relating to that question. My goal was also to gather more information about the industrial Lodz and its society in that period of time.

The PhD thesis deals with the problem of public, social, family, private, and every-day life women, their activities, professions and occupations. My goal was to present all the aspects of women life. It was difficult for me to research, because not all women worked or participated in social life. They also didn't leave behind written accounts of their everyday life – because of that I had to be selective about some aspects.

I conducted my research in the Archives of Lodz. I had access to newspapers from Lodz, which were published in that period of time such as “Kurier Łódzki”, “Nowy Kurier Łódzki”, “Rozwój”, “Gazeta Łódzka”, “Nowa Gazeta Łódzka” etc. Those sources allowed me to discover many intriguing facts about women's life between years 1908 – 1914.

Polish women similarly to women in other European countries had no right to vote and had limited access to education. In feminist movement women saw their chance for a better life/to improve their living conditions. Their actions awakened in other women aspirations to acquire higher education by establishing new workshops and schools. Due to the efforts of feminists women became part of social life of the city. They had aspirations to study and establish new workshops and medium schools for girls. Women settled down new associations. They also took part in the cultural life of the city – they visited libraries, museums, cinemas and theaters. At the same time they also participated in sports and scouting.

There was a significant difference in conditions of life in Lodz and neighbouring villages. It was the reason why many women made a decision to leave their homes and look for their "Promised Land" in the industrial city. Lodz was the symbol of modernization and democratization and enabled women to change their lives.

Even though life in the city gave many opportunities to women, it also exposed them to many dangers particularly those who descended from working class. Many of them became victims of their husbands or random attackers. Especially vulnerable were women who crossed boundaries between their working and private life. Lodz, the so called "bad city", dealt with many problems such as: prostitution, alcoholism, poverty. They were main reason, why women committed crimes – they often became not only thieves, but even murderesses. The last ones were often responsible for infanticides.

Women founded new organizations which aimed at fighting against social pathology in Lodz, using a law implemented in 1906. It regulated activity of associations and created new possibilities for them. Organizations' goal was to support women of varied backgrounds – midwives, household servants, teachers.

Monograph illustrates positive and negative aspects of life of women in Lodz in 1908–1914. It was crucial to emphasize the fact, that it consisted of dangers as well as opportunities.

Sylwana Borsztyńska