

ŁÓDŹ '71

DECEMBER 1970

ON THE POLISH COAST

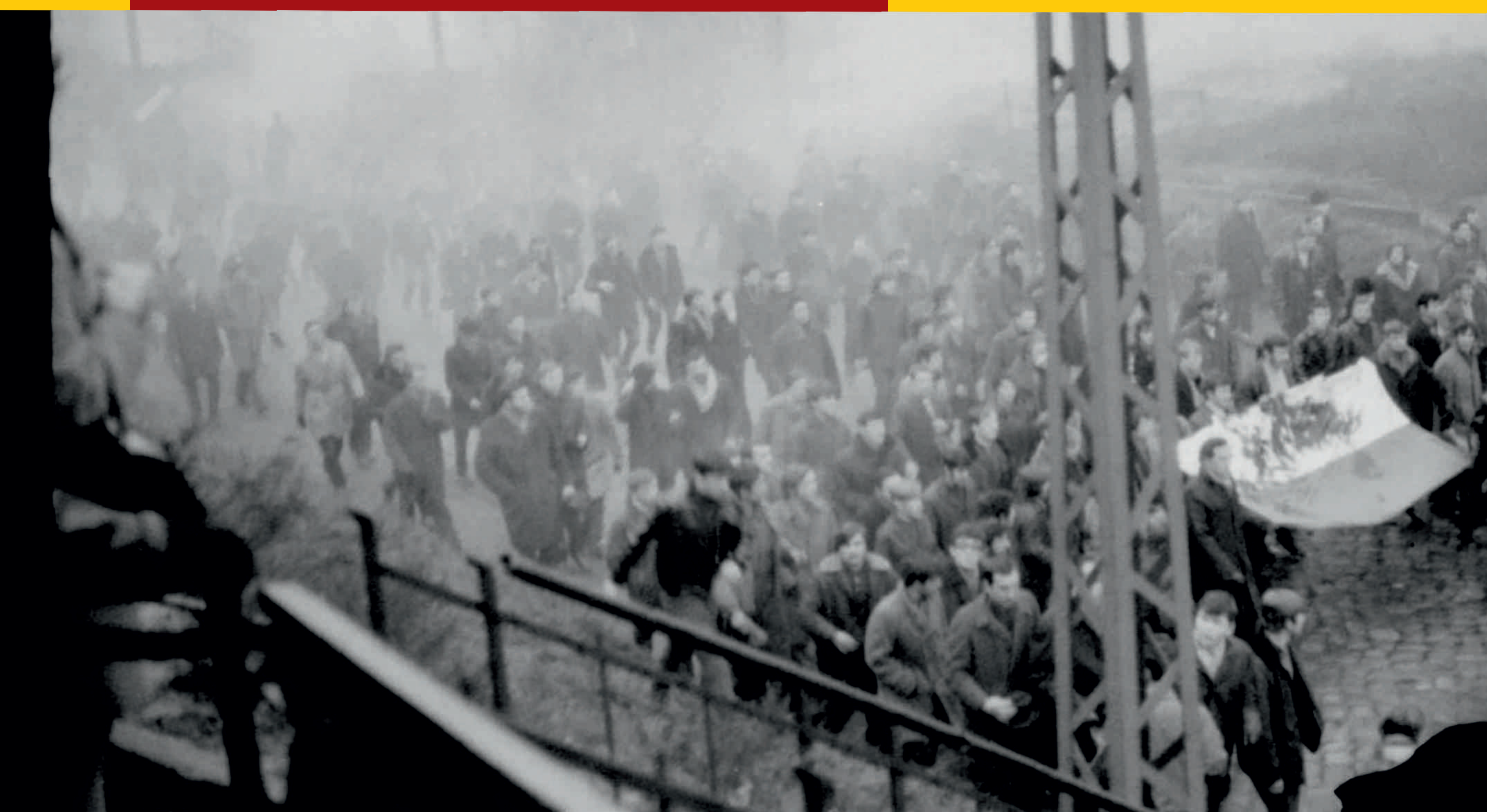
In December 1970, violent workers' protests against rising food prices broke out on the Coast. The regulations introduced before Christmas were an attempt to save the Polish economy, which was on the brink of crisis. On 14 December, the Gdańsk Shipyard went on strike. A general strike was announced the following day. It was joined by the Gdynia Shipyard, and later by workers from the Tri-City, Elbląg, Słupsk and Szczecin.

The confrontational policy of Władysław Gomułka, the First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party, towards the workers led to street protests, clashes with the Militia and arrests. In the evening of 15 December, desperate demonstrators set fire to the Provincial Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party in Gdańsk. When it seemed that there was a chance for the shipyard workers to return to work, in the morning of 17 December, military-backed Militia fired at people going to their first shift to the Komuna Paryska Shipyard in Gdynia. 10 people were killed and several hundred were injured. After the Gdynia massacre and repressions on the inhabitants of the Tri-City, the protests intensified in Szczecin.

The events on the Coast contributed to the changes in the Party authorities. Gomułka was replaced by a more reconciliatory Edward Gierek. However, despite the government's talks with workers in the Szczecin Shipyard and another wave of strikes in January 1971, the price increases were not withdrawn.



To pacify the workers' protests, the communists had used 27,000 soldiers, 9,000 militiamen, 550 tanks, 750 armored personnel carriers, 108 planes and helicopters, 150,000 units of chemical supplies. A total of 46 thousand bullets had been fired. (IPN's Archive in Gdańsk)



According to official data, the victims of the pacification on the Coast totalled: 45 people killed, 116 wounded, 2,989 arrested. (IPN's Archive in Gdańsk)



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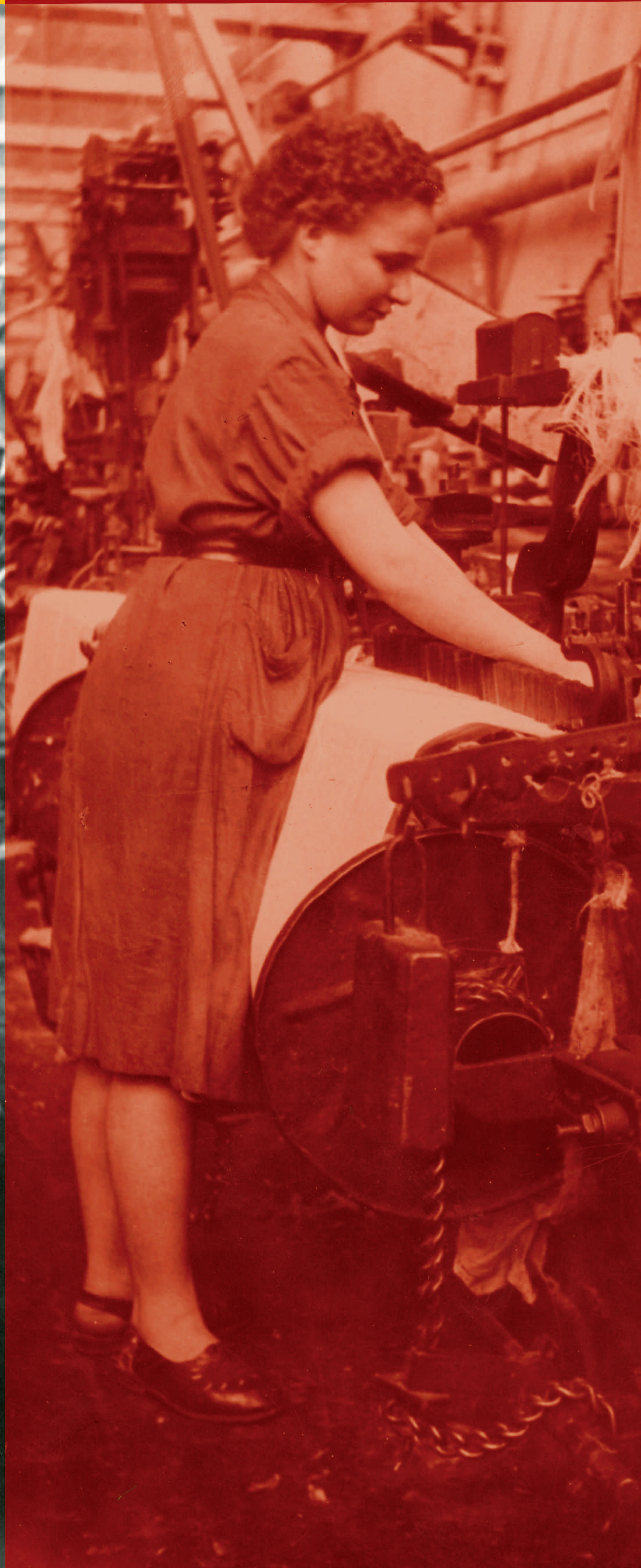
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Translation: Blanka Kamińska-Pienkos, Joanna Kumor

Sources of documents and photographs: Institute of National Remembrance in Gdańsk, Institute of National Remembrance in Łódź, Museum of the Factory in Łódź and the album *Najdłuższe pół wieku*, edited by Krzysztof G. Latocha, Artur Ossowski, Paweł Spodenkiewicz, Magdalena Zapolska-Downar, Łódź 2013.

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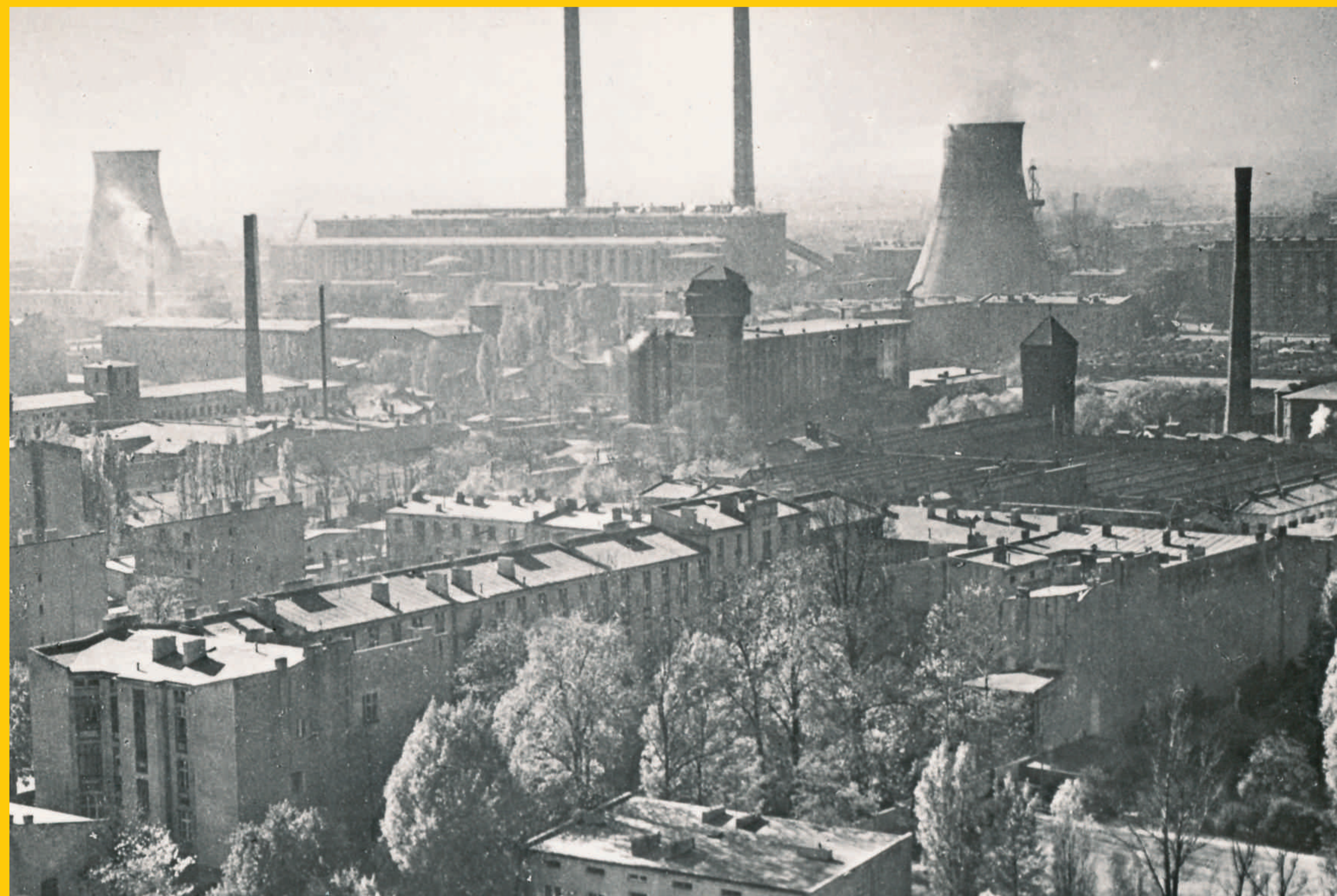
ŁÓDŹ – THE CITY OF WOMEN



In 1971, 755,000 people lived in Łódź, including 455,000 women, 89,000 of whom worked in the textile industry (which constituted about 3/4 of the total number of people employed in this branch of production), hence the name "Łódź – the city of women". Compared to other industrial centers, the living and working conditions in Łódź were difficult. Due to their poor condition, 40% of the plant facilities and machinery, dating back to the 19th century, should in fact have been either replaced or demolished.

The earnings of workers in Łódź reached approximately 80 % of the salaries in large Polish cities. Work in the so-called light industry posed a health risk and resulted in occupational diseases such as pneumoconiosis and hearing loss. Hard working and living conditions resulted in the highest infant mortality rate in Poland. Sheltered workshops for pregnant women began to appear in Łódź factories only at the end of the 1970s. The city, full of destroyed 19th century buildings, was polluted with smoke from factory chimneys.

During a single shift a weaver working by the loom covered a total distance of about 12 kilometers in cotton dust, humidity, high temperature and noise up to 110 decibels.
(Archives of the Museum of the Factory in Łódź)



A panorama of Łódź with the characteristic chimneys of textile plants and No. 2 Heat and Power Plant (EG-2).
(Source: *Najdłuższe pół wieku*, edited by Krzysztof G. Latocha, Artur Ossowski, Paweł Spodenkiewicz, Magdalena Zapolska-Downar, Łódź 2013)



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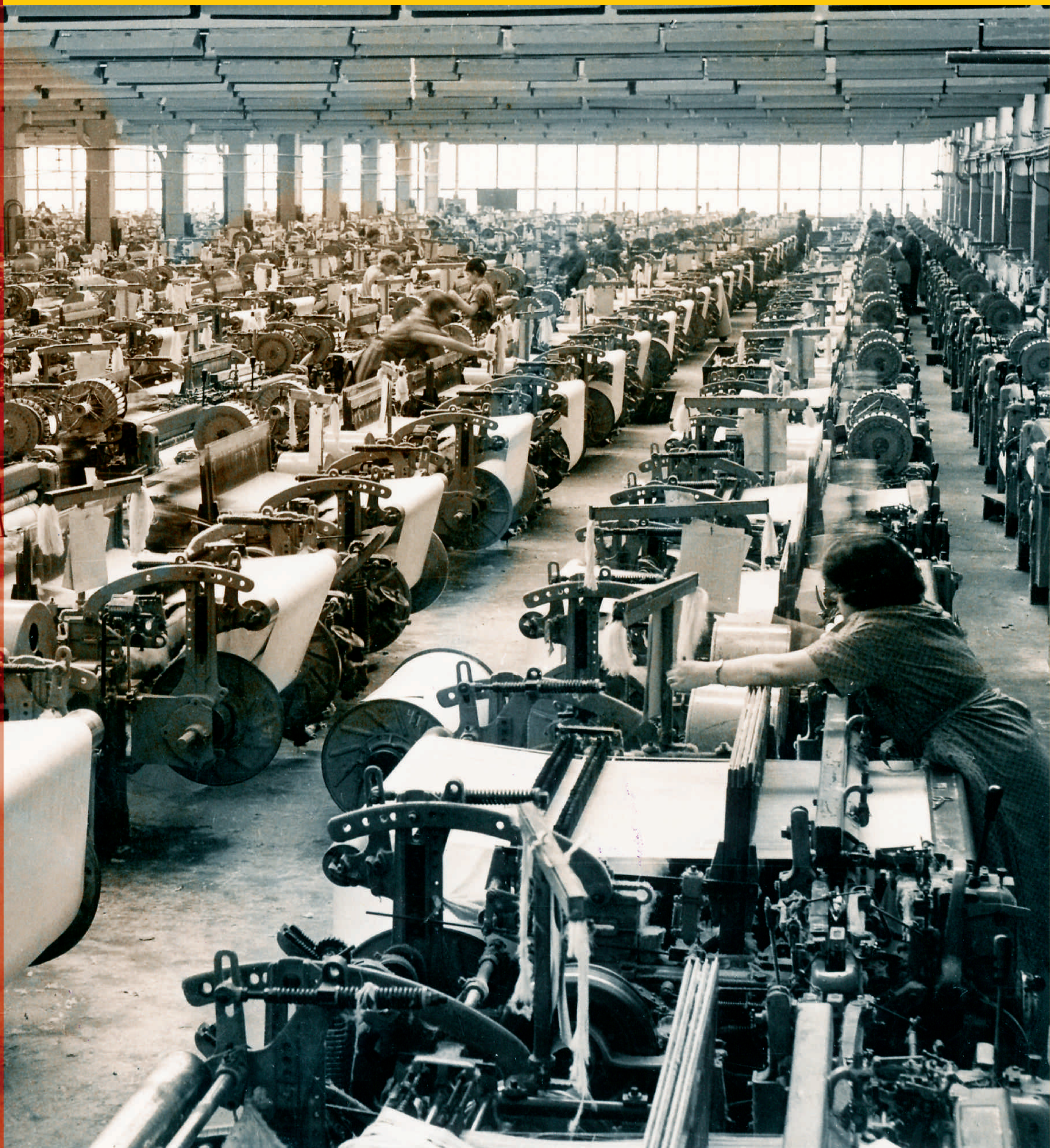
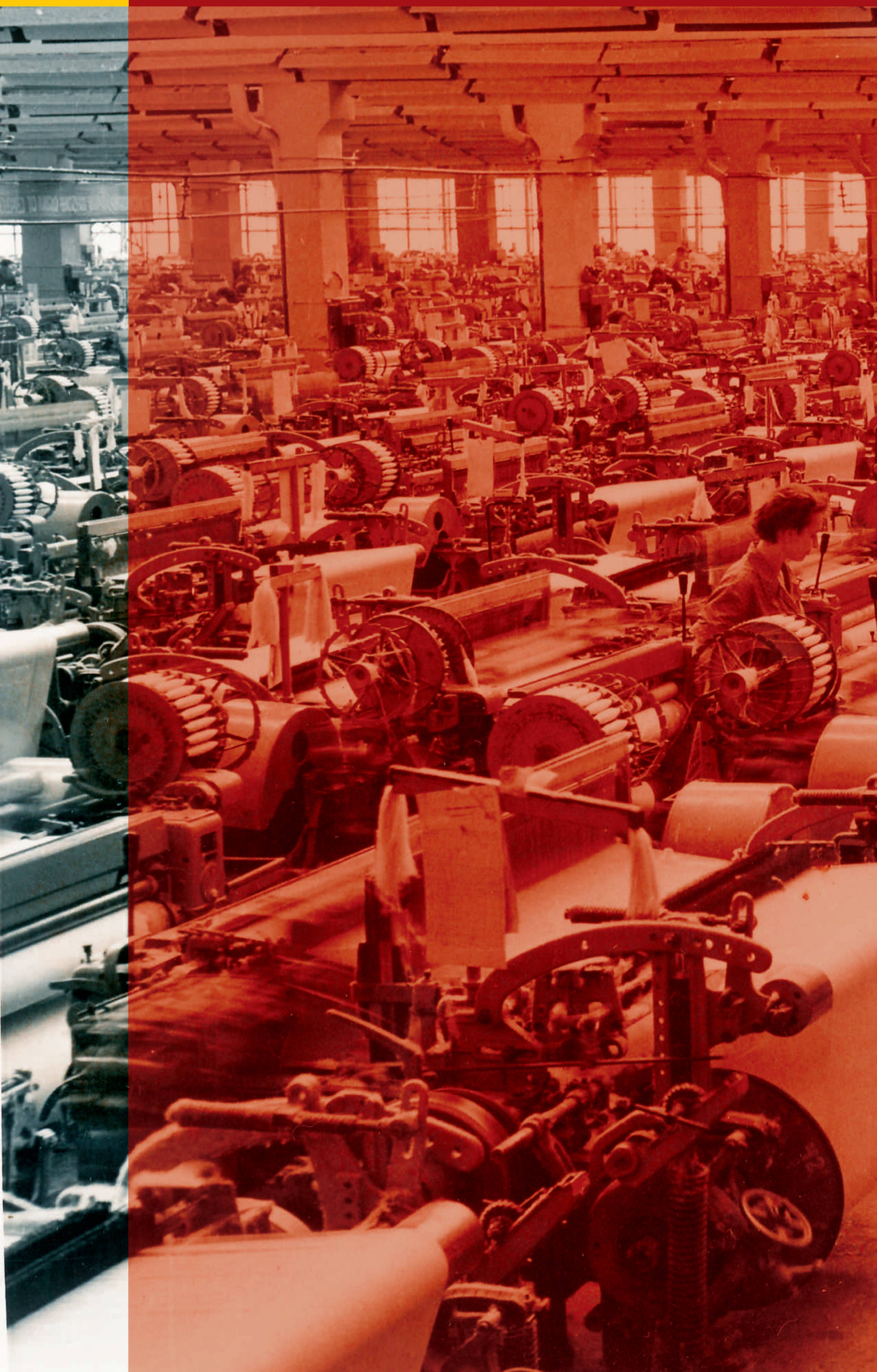
ŁÓDŹ '71

THE ŁÓDŹ STRIKE

Workers' protests in the Coast did not generate broader support on the part of the workers in Łódź. However, dissatisfaction with low wages and the rise in prices was growing among them. Finally, the anticipated wage cuts due to a failure to meet production standards in the textile industry led to an outbreak.

On 10 February 1971, the Stomil Rubber Industry Plant and the Julian Marchlewski Cotton Industry Plant went on strike. In the following six days, 30 more plants joined in the protest. Women constituted the majority of the 55,000 strikers. The protests soon turned into sit-in strikes.

The attention of the authorities focused on the largest factories in Łódź, named after J. Marchlewski and Obrońców Pokoju. A joint Party and government delegation with Prime Minister Piotr Jaroszewicz and representatives of the Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party arrived in Łódź. The determination of the women working in the textile industry exhibited during the talks finally forced the authorities to make concessions and reject the option of quelling the women's strike. It would have been a disaster for the image of the new ruling team in Poland, which had built its position on the wave of criticism of the massacre of workers on the Coast. On 5 February, after returning to Warsaw, Prime Minister Jaroszewicz announced his decision to withdraw from price increases.



The Julian Marchlewski Cotton Industry Plant in Łódź was the largest factory complex in the city, employing 9,000 people.

The photo portrays the weaving mills. Today, these facilities house the Manufaktura Shopping Center.

(Archives of the Museum of the Factory in Łódź)

Łódź, dnia 13 lutego 1971 r.
godzina 10,00
Tajne
Egz-Nr. 4. 16

1. Dyrektor Gabinetu Ministra S.V.
2. Dyrektor Departamentu III MSW
3. Co-Ka-Ka

Warszawa

M e l d u n e k

o sytuacji na terenie m. Łodzi

- W Łódzkich Zakładach Przemysłu Bawełnianego im. Obrońców Pokoju trwa przerwa w pracy 1.600 osób.
- W ZPB im. Marchlewskiego pracuje ok. 350 osób. Pozostała część szefów /ok. 2.500/ nie pracuje.
- Aktualnie w Zakładach tych odbywa się spotkanie z szefami, w którym uczestniczą Tow.Tow. Krużek, Mitręgo, Kunicki, Wróblek i I Sekretarz KL PZPR Tow. J. Sychalski. Wystąpienia przedstawicieli władz są przerywane. Nie powstała im się odwić, sądząc natychmiastowej podwyżki płac o 250 zł. oraz przyznaniu Tow. K.Gierka. Sytuacja jest napięta.
- W Widszewskich Zakładach Przemysłu Bawełnianego im. 1 Maja nie pracuje ok. 1000 osób.
- W ZPB im. H. Sawickiej nie pracuje ok. 400 osób.
- W Łódzkich Przędzalnicach Bawełny im. Gen. Waltera - Oddział "B" nie pracuje ok. 170 osób.
- W ZPB im. Armii Ludowej nie pracuje ok. 1.500 osób.
- I Z-ca Komendanta Miejskiego MO d/s Służby Bezpieczeństwa w Łodzi pík H. Bliski

tajna
nr. 211
z dn. 11.02.71 godz. 1.50

SCYTOGRAM WYSLANY NR 211/71
PRZYJĘTO 11.02.71 godz. 1.50
ZACZYNANO 11.02.71 godz. 1.50

10

oficer dyżurny gabinetu ministra spraw wewnętrznych

M e l d u n e k

do godz. 01.00 dnia 11.02.1971r. sytuacja w zpb im. marchlewskiego przedstawiała się następująco:

- do godz. 21.30 z- ga zmiana przedzalni odpadkowej w calosci nie podjela pracy, wrod strajkujacych robotnikow znajdowalo sie kilka osob ze zmiany 1- szej.
- o godz. 21.30 na teren przedzalni przybyla zmiana 3- cia, ktora rowniez pracy nie podjela, do godz. 01.00 dnia 11.02.71r. na oddziale znakowaly sie takze niektore osoby ze zmiany 1- szej i 2- giej.
- administracja zakladu, kierownictwo kz psp, a takze sekretarze Komitetu dzielnicowego psp uslowali droga indywidualnych rozmow naklonic robotnikow do podjecia normalnej pracy, rezultatu nie osiagnieto.
- na teren zakladu przybyl kierownik i zastepca wydzialu bawełnianego k.t. psp, a takze dyrektor zjednoczenia przem. skonomicznego, oraz przedstawiciele zw. zaw. wlokniany, rowniez rezultatu.
- okolo godz. 0.30 do zakladu przybyl minister przemyslu lekkiego tow. kunicki, aktualnie toczy sie rozmowy w/w aktywni z mistrzami i urzadnikami oddzialu w celu rozmowienia dzialan bhp itp. i uzgodnienia na nie odpowiedzi.
- postulaty zalogi o przeciwnym stanowisku w sprawie przydzialu obowiazkow zadanej podwyzki plac okolo 20-25 proc. zamieniono na indywidualne dostarczenie przez strajkujacych do innych oddzialow, marchlewskiego, z sugestia przyzapienia te proby.
- czynniki polityczne przedswiezyli rowniez okreslone dzialanie zmienszajace do ro zorganizowania aktywu partyjnego, ktory bedzie sie staral nie dopuscic do kontynuowania strajku przez 1- sza zmiane.

z- ca kom. miejskiego mo d/s bezp. w łodzi/-/pl.k.h. tomaszewski

Security Service reports drafted for the Ministry of the Interior, describing the first days of strikes in Łódź, 10-11 February 1971 (IPN's Archive in Łódź)



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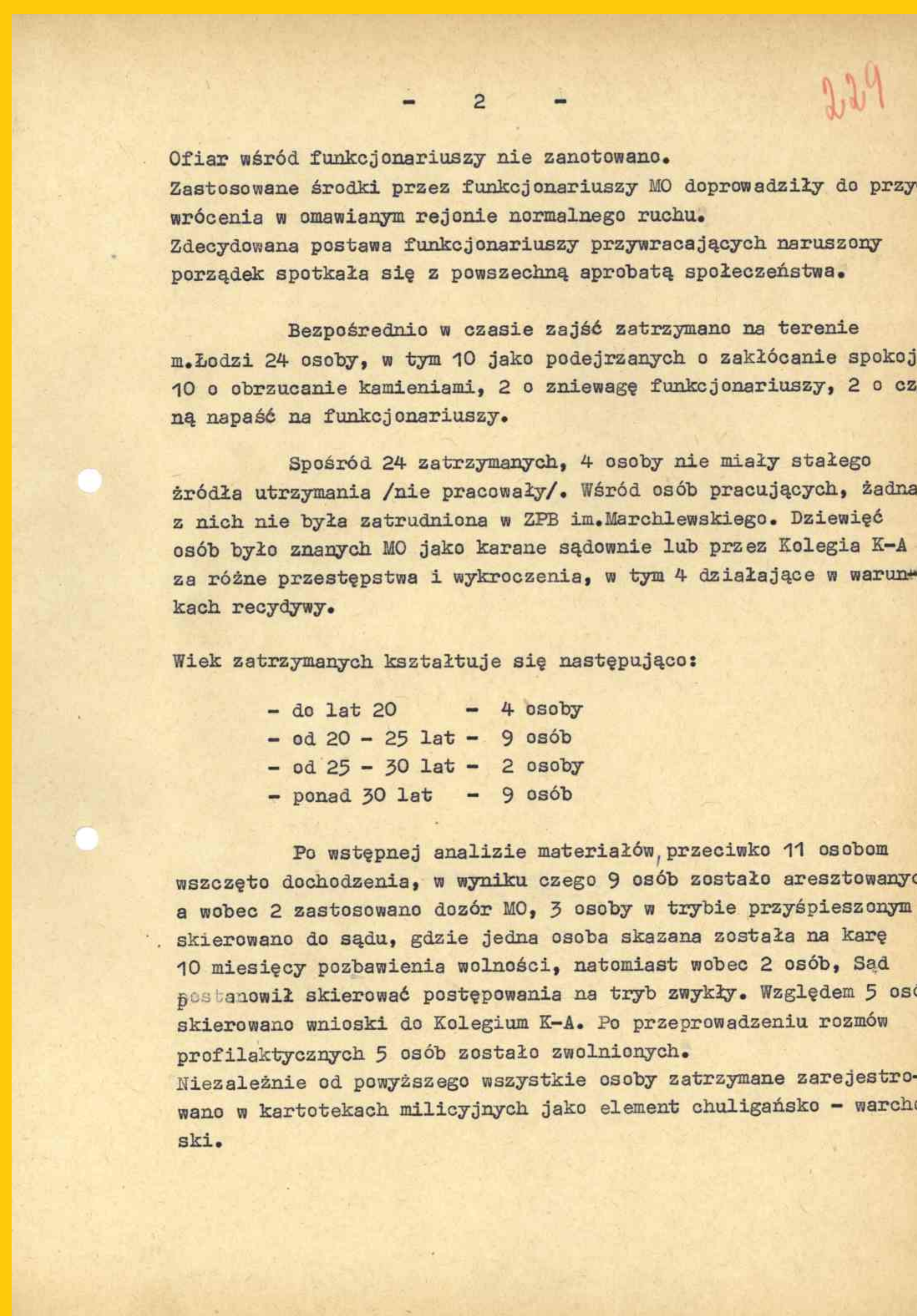
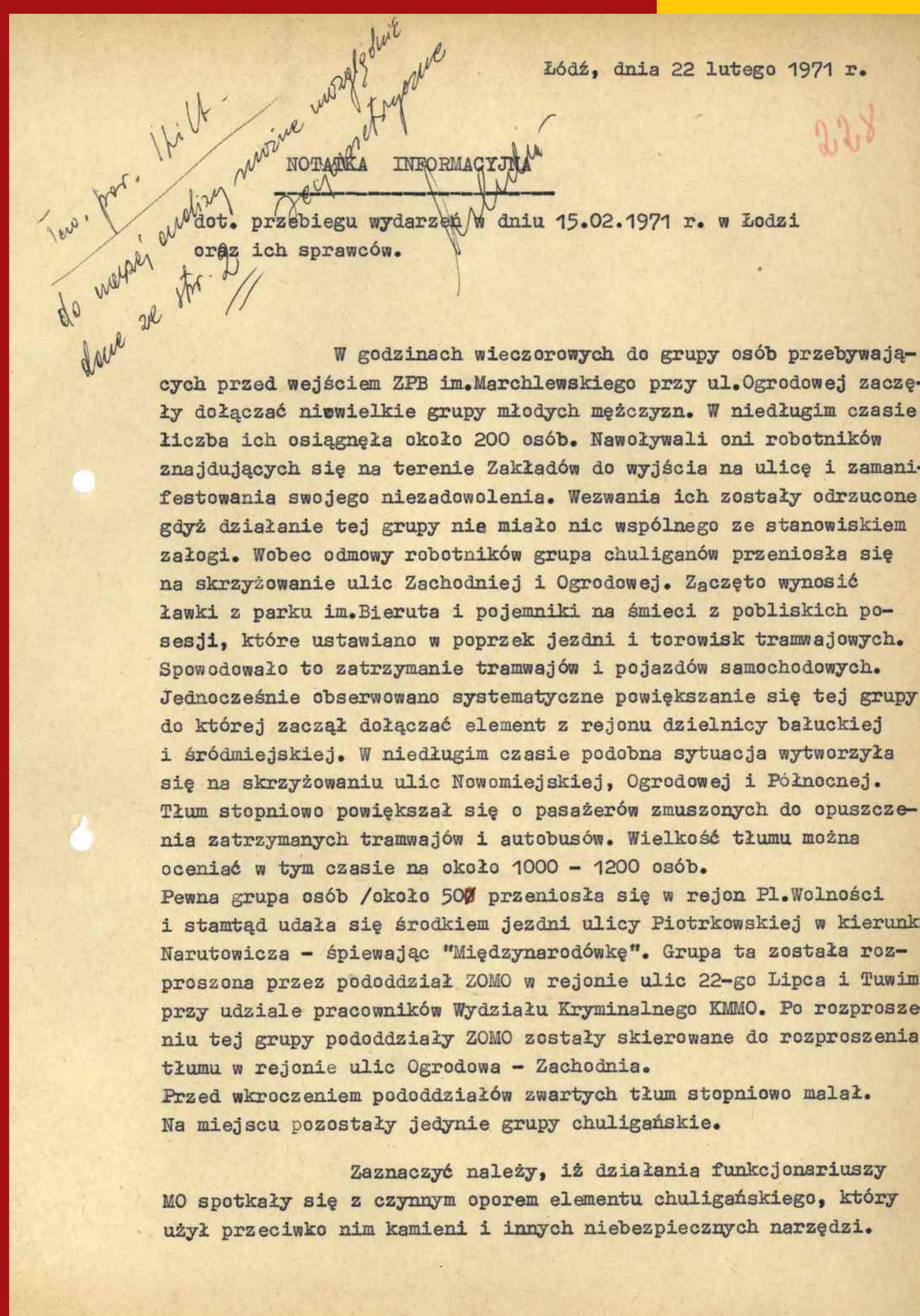
STREET PROTESTS

On 15 February, after the end of talks with the government delegation, which made vague promises to improve the conditions, the strike spread to two more textile plants and 17 others. The strikers were afraid of attempts to break their resistance, for example by turning off the heating in the facilities, and threatened to go out into the streets.

That evening, a crowd of demonstrators gathered at the gate of the Marchlewski plant in Ogrodowa Street. In the following hours the crowd grew to about 1000 people. The protesters blocked the streets surrounding the factory and stopped trams and cars. The Citizen's Militia partially dispersed the demonstrators, who then went to the seat of the Łódź Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party. Ultimately, the demonstration was stopped in the vicinity of Kościuszki and Zamenhofa Streets. The clashes between the demonstrators and the police ended after midnight. About 30 people were detained.

The information that the price increase would be withdrawn reached Łódź during street demonstrations, in practice putting an end to the protests and strikes. They finally died out on 17 February.

What the shipyard workers from the Tri-City and Szczecin did not manage to accomplish was achieved by the women of Łódź, employed in the textile industry.



The demonstrators were portrayed in police reports as hooligans, not as people fighting for the country's freedom. (IPN's Archive in Łódź)



Photos of people detained on 15-16 February in Łódź, taken by the Citizens' Militia. (IPN's Archive in Łódź)



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