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THERE WAS NO SUCH CITY. THE IMAGE OF WARSAW IN OLD POSTCARDS*

Despite the unwaning interest in old illustrated postcards, as reflected in numerous publications, exhibitions and permanent presence in the offer of auction houses, we conventionally link them with our longing for the past rather than reflect on them critically in order to ascertain a correct reading of the iconographic message. Researchers' studies, few and far between in Polish literature, focus primarily on the promotion of collecting itself, on its origins and development as well as signal possible areas of scientific exploration. The conviction that postcards "provide important and interesting information that is not contained in archival sources and can significantly extend the existing knowledge about changes occurring in cities" is accompanied in this discourse by a strong awareness of the falsified image of the past depicted by postcards. The widespread availability of old postcards, the wealth of their subjects and visual attractiveness make them readily available for use as illustrations not only in general interest but also in scientific publications devoted to history, especially in the first half of the 20th century. The centennial anniversary of the outbreak of the First World War, Poland's regaining independence or the Polish-Bolshevik War are events that determine the publishers' policy to the same extent as the need for a visual commemoration of the past.

* The article is a translation of the Polish version of the text.

In the context of Warsaw, the literal and sentimental value of illustrated postcards is usually enhanced by the city's tragic history in the 20th century. The iconography which shows buildings which are no longer to be seen, documenting a complete change in the development of particular streets, blocks or quarters, determines the antiquarian price of pre-war postcards from Warsaw to a greater extent than the size of the print-run, the uniqueness of the subject or their being part of a particular publishing series. "It should be remembered that for a city whose 85 percent of buildings were destroyed during the last war (...), all iconographic records are invaluable", argued Krystyna Lejko[1]. However, the essence of the measures that make the postcard image of the city unreal begs a question not so much about the documentary value of this kind of material as about its power to create false cultural images. From the very moment of its birth, the postcard became a medium disseminating the myth of a big, modern city and the happy life of its inhabitants. The possibility of mass dissemination of all photographic views was quickly verified by the laws of the market. The subject matter and style of the reproduced motifs was determined by the taste of the consumers, who demanded images of the space in which they would rather live than those reflecting actual reality. As Paweł Banaś aptly put it: "The postcard lies (...); its authors are not only after a faithful representation of the surrounding reality, the buildings, monuments or bridges, but also after a vision of an ideal city, which was and has remained an epitome of cosmic order. They depicted a city which, as the postcards tries to show to us, can be everywhere yet in reality operates solely in our dreams".[2] As an element of mass culture, the postcard illustration satisfied above all the need for unlimited consumption;[3] it was a prepared image available nearly immediately for little money.

Popular albums, released in recent years and presenting old Warsaw postcards, refer to the myth of a space irrevocably lost and thus emotionally ennobled in much the same way. The very titles of these publications, such as *Było takie miasto* [There was once a city] and *Utracone Miasto* [Lost city],[4] are expressive of the nostalgia for the past. The awareness of a certain fragmentary nature of the presented material largely orders here the sentimental form of a "walk into the past" to which the authors invite us. As Rafał Bielski writes in the introduction to his publication: "I have no illusions. The album will not provide a complete picture of pre-war Warsaw. The images show a small fragment of the city, dubbed 'the Paris of the East' before the war".[5] Popular publications, among others, essentially tear the postcard illustra-

1 K. Lejko, "Warszawa przed I wojną światową – wygląd i życie miasta na kartkach pocztowych", in: *Miasto na pocztówce. Poznań na tle porównawczym*, Poznań 1999, p. 87.
2 P. Banaś, *Orbis pictus. Świat dawnej karty pocztowej*, Wrocław 2005, p. 55.
3 G. Machel, "Idealny obraz miasta na karcie pocztowej", in: *Aksjosemiotyka karty pocztowej*, Wrocław 1992, p. 204.
4 R. Bielski, *Było takie miasto. Warszawa na starych pocztówkach*, Warszawa 2008, (2nd edition: Warszawa 2013); R. Bielski, J. Jastrzębski, *Utracone miasto. Warszawa wczoraj i dziś*, Warszawa 2016.
5 R. Bielski, *Było takie miasto...*, p. 5.

tion not only out of the context of the history of a given place, but also ignore almost completely the editorial culture of the day, the history of photography or the development of printing techniques. Replacement of lithographic stone with gelatine collotype not only increased the possibilities of printing, but also enabled more precise reproduction of photographic images on paper. The invention of rotogravure printing contributed to a mass production of postcards and in fact revolutionised the whole thinking about the duplication of illustrations at that time. It moreover had an impact on the gradual marginalisation of the role and significance of the illustrated correspondence card. Contemporary albums presenting old postcards, usually accompanied by concise descriptions and limited commentary, in fact merely duplicate the iconographic role of old illustrations. As Rudolf Jaworski rightly pointed out: "Most publications simply show the old postcards in the illusionary hope that they will speak for themselves. This method (...) is expressive of a naïve joy and fascination with the finds and of quasi-scientific convictions of the obvious capacity of images to bear witness to themselves"[6].

The image of Warsaw emerging from postcards is an image falsified not only by the subjective nature of photography itself and by deliberately retouched compositions of pictures, which in the initial period often still seemed quite random. The key role was played here by the broadly understood interest of the publisher, for whom postcard printing was above all a commercial enterprise supposed to generate income, understood not only in the financial sense as a quick return of the costs incurred. Almost from the very emergence of the illustrated postcard, which in the Russian Empire and Warsaw took place in 1895[7], the publishers - mainly owners of art shops, paper warehouses or bookstores - saw it as an excellent means of advertising and a magnet for customers. The necessity of pandering to the mass clientele had a decisive influence on the idealisation of the presented views and on rendering the image of the city less realistic.

The collection of the Museum of Warsaw includes nearly 10,000 postcards and this set is regularly supplemented by new items. The collection, which is still incomplete, is extensive enough to exemplify the phenomenon of the falsification of the city image. Due to the gradual marginalisation of the status of the postcard in mass culture after World War Two as well as the monopolisation and full control of the publishing market in the realities of a socialist state, I focused my considerations on specimens from the period up to 1939. Although the regularities indicated here also apply to contemporary production, the caesura of the war as a borderline experience of the city's extermination is not without significance for this argument. In a similar way, I nar-

6 R. Jaworski, "Stare pocztówki jako przedmiot badań kulturoznawczych", in: *Miasto na pocztówce. Poznań na tle porównawczym*, Poznań 1999, p. 17.

7 In the autumn of 1894, the tsarist authorities adopted a special resolution allowing the production of black correspondence cards by natural persons. The first postcards of Warsaw were published by Edward Chodowiecki, as accounted for in *Kurier Warszawski* (no. 254 of 2 (14) September 1895) in the *Current News* section.

rowed the discussion and exemplifications down to topographic postcards, consciously omitting the rich iconography of greeting or holiday cards.

When dealing with the oldest postcards, we must also be aware that there is no complete list of all the printed materials under the umbrella term "the Warsaw postcard". Neither is there a list of all the companies that issued them, or even company catalogues which would include individual series. Attempts are recreating such lists can be made upon the analysis of the material at hand and the meagre publishers' advertising information in the press of the day.

Factors which falsify the image of Warsaw in old postcards can be divided roughly into two groups. These were on the one hand cases of deliberate selection of material and the use of aesthetic enhancement of the reproduced illustrations and on the other hand all kinds of editorial mistakes.

In the Russian partitioned territories, all drawings, engravings and lithographs distributed by means of printing were subject to strict control under the *Law on Censorship and the Press* of 1890. Postcards publishers, e.g. Stanisław Winiarski's paper warehouse in Warsaw, included relevant notices on all their cards. Initially, it was preventive censorship aimed at the rejection of political illustrations, referring to events in Polish history, undermining the teachings of the Orthodox Church, insulting the emperor's house, as well as violating good manners and morals. Due to the ambiguity of the provisions of the Law, the political situation and the dynamic growth of postcards production, ca. 1905 the monitoring of published and distributed material took turned into repressive censorship[8]. Censors confiscated mainly postcards with reproductions of paintings by Wojciech Kossak, Artur Grottger and Jan Matejko brought from Krakow. The views of the city such as plazas, squares, streets, historical and newly constructed buildings were found fit for publication regardless of their possible connotations. The key to the selection of topics was, first of all, the purely formal recognition of a given place and its representative character. Thus the illustrated postcards did not contain images of neglected, nondescript or peripheral places. Postcards were produced on the basis of pictures taken earlier by professional photographers. The names of some of them are known today thanks to the preserved originals, because the regulations of the time did not protect copyrights. Once the publishers acquired the photographs, they reused them, mainly for economic reasons, until their obsoleteness became evident. Actually, the pace of changes taking place in the urban space of Warsaw was so rapid that some of the postcard contents quickly became obsolete. At that time, card publishers used retouching to make the subject of the postcards more abstract and universal. Let us have a look at three postcards that reproduce the same collotype photograph with the Church of All Saints in Grzybowski Square (ill. 1).

The first of them, published by Stanisław Winiarski in 1902, presents the finished church with piles of bricks clearly visible in front of it. The photo-

8 More on this subject, see: J. Jackowski, "Cenzura pocztówek pod zaborem rosyjskim w latach 1894–1915", in: *Aksjosemiotyka karty pocztowej II*, Wrocław–Warszawa 2004, p. 83–95.

graph was probably taken while the construction of the church's presbytery, completed in 1903, was still in progress. In the next postcard, issued ca. 1907 by the first Warsaw-based photo-chemigraphy studio of Bolesław Wierzbicki, the bricks were carefully retouched and the whole picture was additionally coloured. The choice of colours does not reflect natural hues but is subject to some general logic, namely the lawn is green and the shop signs are yellow. The roof of the church was coloured orange, the popular colour of rooftiles, although we know that in reality the roof was made of sheet metal. In a postcard issued ca. 1909 by Antoni Chlebowski, the roof of the church has its actual colour, but the tenement house at 1 Plac Grzybowski was "fitted" with rooftiles, probably to resemble the neighbouring (former) annexe of the Gutakowski Palace; only half of its mansard roof was coloured by an inattentive retoucher. The last postcard was also aesthetically enhanced: removed from the original picture were the Bell telephone pole (they all vanished from the city landscape after the introduction of the underground system of the Swedish company Cedergren) and a street vendor with a cart. A comparison of the three postcards reveals one more regularity. It would seem that the oldest of them is devoid of any interference in the reproduced image. However, if we compare the shadow cast in the foreground by the Wolanowski tenement house in two subsequent editions, we realize that this view is a far cry from "unadulterated". In the monochromatic edition, the interplay of lights and shadows determined the aesthetics of the whole composition, which in the case of coloured prints was no longer so prominent.

The above example poses an additional problem, that of the correct dating of postcards. An absence of catalogues and the ephemeral character of these prints is not even the most important factor here. In relation to the illustrated postcards we can distinguish three moments ordering the chronology: the date of creation of the photograph (illustration), the date of a postcard's publication and finally the date of it being sent, confirmed by the postage cancellation. The time lag between these three moments could be a dozen or, in extreme cases, even several dozen years. The publishers of postcards, especially companies that began to specialize in their production, paid attention not only to economic aspects, but also to practical considerations. Of key importance among the latter was the pace of production of ever new series with the use of ready-made material, updated at times with more or less careful retouching.

The speed of production seemed to be the key issue in supplying a market that was extremely absorbent at the beginning of the 20th century. Apart from aesthetics, innovation and fashion could have been decisive for publishing success, which relied on distinguishing oneself from the growing competition. A perfect example of the pace of spreading visual information about changes in the urban space of Warsaw are the cards issued between 1900 and 1902 by Aleksander Konheim. In this case, the postcards made use of architectural plans of newly erected buildings rather than their photographs. Postcard number 129 (ill. 2) shows a design of the building of the Zachęta So-

ciety for the Encouragement of Fine Arts by Stefan Szyller, with a fountain envisaged in the square in front of the entrance yet in fact never erected. This is not the only difference between the initial design and the completed construction. At the entrance to the building, on both sides of the stairs, we can also see plinths designed by the architect with figures that were never actually installed there. The pedestals stood empty until the early 1970s, when decorative cast-iron lanterns were placed on them. The postcard illustration was additionally transformed into a night-time and a winter view, which was probably to some extent meant to imply the time-honoured stability of the otherwise new building. The "construction fever" in the nation's capital at the beginning of the new century corresponded perfectly with the myth of the modern city, which was perpetrated by means of postcard illustrations. It almost became a rule that all major public buildings erected in Warsaw (e.g. the technical university, the philharmonic hall and the main post office) were immediately placed on the obverse of postcards. In a situation where publishers did not have any graphic visualisations of the buildings, they used photographs from construction sites, carefully retouched the scaffolding and themselves added the non-existent sections of the building[9].

At the peak of the postcard fad, in the years 1900-1904, publishers surpassed each other in offering more and more sophisticated and original cards. Clients could therefore buy cards with gilding, embossing, appliques woven from silk or movable elements. Postcards with night-time city views, extremely fashionable, were a part of the mainstream of urban views. Technically it was impossible to achieve satisfactory results in the creation of night-time photographs to be legibly reproduced on postcards. This effect was achieved by darkening daytime photos and adding a few retouched, bright spots in the form of the moon or a lantern. The German Wolf Hagelberg publishing house from Berlin patented its own idea for this type of postcard, involving cutting out and gluing yellow paper to highlight the "light spots". When viewed against the light, such postcards were supposed to create the effect of a genuine nocturnal scene, illuminated by artificial lamps and the crescent of the moon. In a card of this type from ca. 1900, which made use of a photograph by Jan Raczynski[10] featuring a panorama of the fair in the Old Market Square (ill. 3), we can see not only an excess of lights in nearly all the windows, doors and spherical lamps hung above the vending stalls, but also unintentional funny errors. In the corner above the Falkiewiczowska tenement house (at 28 Old Market Square) we can see a "window" cut out in the sky; similarly, the roof of the Kleinpoldowska house is alight (at 34 Old Market Square). The shadows cast by the human figures in the photographs are directed towards the moon, visible in the northern sky.

9 An excellent example is the Church of the Most Holy Saviour, built in 1901-1911 and a postcard published ca. 1908 by Hersz Piórnik; see more: R. Marcinkowski, *Ilustrowany atlas dawnej Warszawy*, Warszawa 2004, p. 200.

10 This author of the photograph is indicated in postcards from ca. 1910 by Sommer i Poznański Publishers.

The appearance of the first electric trams on the streets of Warsaw in 1908 was a significant event in the process of the city's development. Tram cars were eagerly photographed at busy junctions in order to further emphasize the dynamism of the modern metropolis. They also almost instantly appeared on illustrated postcards. Publishers who did not have any current photographic material at their disposal used retouching. Added to postcards were usually some shapeless outlines of an entire tram. In this case, no attention was paid to the reliability of the composition, proportions or technical details. A postcard issued ca. 1908 by the Brothers Rzepkowicz Company shows in the background an ineptly drawn electric tram, although there were no traction poles or wires in Nowy Świat Street, photographed ca. 1901 (ill. 4). The fascination with the new means of public transport was so great that in order to further highlight its existence, an artificially exaggerated electric tram could be seen in the background. The fascination with the new means of public transport was so great that in order to further emphasize its existence, an artificially exaggerated traction network was added. This can be seen in a postcard published ca. 1913 by Świt Publishing Society, printed in Wierzbicki's studio (ill. 5). Even a decade later, when cards reproduced by means of the photographic method were in circulation on a mass scale, electric trams added as drawings continued to traverse the streets of Warsaw. We can see it e.g. in the postcard from ca. 1928 from the publishing office of Konstanty Wojutyński (ill. 6).

The dynamic development of printing techniques using halftone in the years preceding the outbreak of World War I resulted in introducing a new type of postcards with a fully colourful illustration. Of course, this was not yet a reproduction of colour photography, but a picture carefully prepared by a retoucher and mechanically dyed. In contrast to cards with a hand-made, limited colour palette, the new technique made it possible to use gradient transitions in colour tones, which were used primarily to prepare a luminous glow in the sky. This method was more economical than the autotype, used primarily to reproduce paintings on postcards. However, if we take a close look at the individual illustrations, we can easily notice the imperfections of this technique as well. For example, it required additional reinforcement of contours, lost half shades, and continued to reflect the colours imposed by the printer, rather than the actual ones. Let us take as an example the postcard published ca. 1915 by Joseph Gutgeld, depicting Warecki Square (ill. 7). This illustration was prepared on the basis of a photograph taken before 1912. The initial material was carefully retouched; we can see here clearly marked contours of buildings, inconsistencies in the colours of the Minter house, as well as a fancy tenement house with large window frames on the first and second floors at the corner of Świętokrzyska and Mazowiecka Streets. However, our attention is drawn here mainly to the trees and the whole square, whose thoughtful, carefully elaborated colours add to the unusual air of the entire venue. The big city buildings in the background, rather chaotic, are in fact an insignificant addition to the green oasis shown in the foreground.

The freedom in composing the palette of colour illustrations can be best judged by comparing two cards representing the same building. Let us examine for instance the postcards with the presentation of the Church of St. Alexander Nevsky from the publishing houses of A.J. Ostrowski (ill. 8) and K. Wojutyński (ill. 9). In the postcard of the Łódź-based publisher, the church and the belfry were painted to reflect the truly Byzantine splendour of the building; the other postcard uses a more subdued palette, emphasizing only the "gold plating" of architectural elements. The buildings in the background are different, too, and the Europejski Hotel visible on the left in both postcards, sparkles with divergent colours. Postcards, especially those printed abroad, reveal a number of such distortions. Sometimes, as in the case of a tram painted green as in Berlin (a card depicting Krakowskie Przedmieście Street, printed by the Stockholm company Granbergs Konstindustri Aktiebolags on behalf of A.S. Suworin i Spółka), they are conspicuous and easy to catch.

The conventionality as well as the perfunctory and unrealistic nature of the colours, the artificially overdrawn clouds, the clichéd and maudlin ornaments used in postcard illustrations were often criticised in the press of the time and presented as an example of bad taste, which did not particularly disturb the buyers. The print-runs of individual series were probably limited in size and the goods did not need to be stored in a warehouse. Publishing companies used different market strategies; the same set of cards was printed every year, at best most with minor modifications (Hersz Piórnik). Otherwise, a fad for novelties was fostered by using the same set of photographs for printing in currently fashionable forms or colour palettes. Issued in 1913, a series of Warsaw cards by another Swedish company, Ernst G. Svanström, was marked by a contrasting combination of the blue sky with white clouds and red rooftops of buildings. In the card presenting the panorama of Nowy Zjazd (ill. 10), the colourful spots are so predominant that we hardly notice the absence of the River Vistula and the Kierbedzia Bridge in the background. The tin roofs of the Camponi tenement house (70 Krakowskie Przedmieście Street), the Royal Castle (except the so-called Saxon Annexe) and even the Copper-Roof Palace were painted red to enliven the whole composition rather than to mimic the reality.

One variation of this manner of illustrating black-and-white collotypes, taking liberties with the actual city space, were two series of postcards published by Ostrowski and Wojutyński, set predominantly in orange hues, where the sky in the background, the buildings and the streets were coloured with the same hue and only selected elements were highlighted with a different colour. Both publishers realised the arbitrariness of such images as the drawn clouds would not even come close to realistic ones[11]. Within a convention they both adopted, they primarily wanted to supply a product of a specific aesthetic value (ill. 11).

11 Karin Walter analysed the extant photographic materials of the Metz publishing house from Tübingen, which had a whole set of ready-made cloud formations (as well as different kinds of staffage), which were used in the production of postcards. See: K. Walter, "Widokówka i fotografia", in: *Miasto na pocztówce. Poznań na tle porównawczym*, Poznań 1999, p. 27.

By 1939, there were many and varied attempts to solve the problems with the unrealistic colours of reproduced illustrations. Some publishers deliberately gave up the production of multi-coloured cards, introducing postcards only slightly enhanced with one colour. Monochrome printing gained most of all after the addition of blue or orange backgrounds and such colour variations appeared most frequently on the market.

The outbreak of World War I and the German occupation of Warsaw in the years 1915-1918 was the time when the city began the process of redefining its identity. However, in the iconographic sphere, the postcards of this period essentially reproduce both the earlier photographic material created during the Russian partition and the methods of its processing.

In order to boost the morale of the soldiers at the front, German propaganda willingly used the motif of Warsaw's occupation on postcards. The reality of the representations was not particularly important here and hurriedly executed prints, paintings and collages were used to glamorise military successes. The most interesting cards published at that time included a series by the Vertriebsgesellschaft deutscher Buchhändler from Berlin. In order to create a series of propagandistic postcards, the publisher used photographs of Warsaw taken ca. 1902 and then printed on postcards for the Brothers Rzepkowicz Company. The collage method applied to this material cut out fragments of photographs taken by Alfred Kühlewindt in August 1915, after the German troops entered the capital of the Kingdom of Poland. Let us take a look at a postcard depicting Krakowskie Przedmieście Street near the square with the Adam Mickiewicz Monument (ill. 12).

To produce this card, the producer used a photograph taken before 1902 (ill. 13), to which a German cavalry unit was added from a photograph by Alfred Kühlewindt (ill. 14). In a similar way, a whole series of propagandistic cards was prepared. Sometimes the collage was made carelessly, without care for proportions and out of synch with the historical context of the objects in the background. In the case of a few postcards, identical figures of General Reinhard von Schaffer-Boyadel and Field Marshal Leopold of Bavaria were used, from a photograph taken on Saski Square during the ceremonial parade after the conquest of the city. This series, reproduced by means of a collotype method, has another version in blue. The use of colour was probably supposed to cover up the publisher's interference with the original material[12].

Postcards issued in the interwar period slowly departed from the previous style. The spread of the mechanical method of copying photographs on an industrial scale and the invention of rotogravure changed the appearance and character of postcards. The cards with reproductions of original photographs, showing the "real" face of the city through the subjective prism,

12 In a publication by L. Królikowski and K. Oktabiński, *Warszawa 1914–1920*, Warszawa 2008, illustrations nos. 97 and 102 are postcards from this series. Their captions read, respectively: "A German patrol in Miodowa Street, August 1915" and "German outpost in front of Hala Mirowska", which implies that the book authors did not see through the sham.

became fashionable. Jan Bułhak, Jan Wołyński and Henryk Poddębski are the names of leading Polish photographers who, in a sense, determined the artistic level of Warsaw postcards of that period. This does not mean that the aesthetic treatment of the published illustrations was completely abandoned. Retouches, even in a rather drastic form, can be found on both photographic and printed postcards. The products of the Konstanty Wojutyński publishing house, active since ca. 1902 almost until the outbreak of World War II, furnish unmatched material for analysing this phenomenon.

Little is known about the company and its owner. He probably died in 1934, and the publishing house was going through a difficult period as a result. Nevertheless, four series appeared later on the market signed: "Zdjęcia z teki K. Wojutyńskiego – Warszawa" [Photographs from the K. Wojutyński portfolio – Warsaw], which does not specify whether the company continued its operations. Probably the heirs of the estate, perhaps the widow, decided to continue their editorial activity in some form. This phrase may also suggest that Wojutyński was the author of the photographs, yet this is rather a legacy of many different authors, created in the course of the many years of the publishing house's activity. The last series, published ca. 1938, with a characteristic wavy edge, consisting of 147 numbered cards, was not marketed at all at the time of publication, which additionally generates speculations concerning the fate of the company after the death of its owner. Card no. 119 of the last series shows an unrealistic view of Krakowskie Przedmieście (ill. 15). The roadway of the street was carefully retouched and e.g. we do not see tram tracks here. Moreover, the building of the Staszic Palace and the square with the Nicolaus Copernicus statue, which is almost completely disappearing, have been incompetently integrated into the background. Although the shot was taken towards the south, the building does not cast a shadow on the retouched street.

We do not know which photograph was used for this postcard, but it was probably taken prior to 1914, when the palace was decorated in Byzantine style by the Russian architect Vladimir Pokrovsky. There is no way of knowing what was removed from the foreground. Most probably these were the figures of passers-by, whose clothing may have immediately betrayed the time when the picture was taken. The hay wagon visible under the building of the 3rd Men's Middle School was not removed from the composition, which may indicate that the mystification efforts were aimed primarily at updating the view and not at its aesthetic idealisation.

The examples presented here, cases of intentional manipulations to render an unrealistic image of Warsaw on postcards, do not exhaust all the possibilities of procedures and do not determine the scope of their application in practice. Basically, each illustration reproduced on postcards is a separate case to be confronted with the available iconographic material.

The second group of postcards, no less interesting than the previous one, which equally effectively falsifies the image of the city, includes editions that are marked by unconscious editorial mistakes. These errors can be divided

into three categories: formal (e.g. wrong caption), structural (e.g. directional inversion of the reproduced illustration) and related to the source (use of unverified iconographic sources). Such errors can be put down to the complexity of the publishing process (e.g. the need to print cards abroad) and attributed to the political events that disrupt this process (e.g. warfare), a lack of editorial supervision or the requirements of the market and the need to quickly satisfy demand.

Postcards with errors, just like in the case of philately, are rare and as a result immensely popular with collectors. As far as Warsaw is concerned, the majority of postcards with mixed-up captions were created during the German occupation in the years 1915-1918. At that time they were printed mainly by companies from the Reich, whose unfamiliarity with the local nomenclature and topography could not in any way halt the production intended for soldiers at the front. The troops were exempt from postage fees and the open form of postcard correspondence was favourable to military censorship, which is why the demand for postcards during World War I significantly surpassed editorial capabilities. German card manufacturers did not particularly care about the credibility and timeliness of the presented views, but rather about the patriotic message, which sometimes manifested itself in the form of presenting the conquered territories of Russia, including the Kingdom of Poland, as poor and economically backward.

Postcards with erroneous captions are relatively easy to recognise if one has some basic knowledge about the historical iconography of Warsaw. There are several such postcards issued by various German publishing companies. The collection of the Museum of Warsaw includes a postcard depicting the view of Nowy Zjazd, incidentally made ca. 1902, with horse-drawn trams, signed as "Die Neue Welt in Warschau", i.e. as Nowy Świat [New World] (ill. 16).

The use of such illustrations in historical publications requires extraordinary care and thorough verification of the source material. In the album titled *1918. Odzyskiwanie Niepodległej*, Warszawa 2008, published by Ośrodek KARTA, in p. 49 there is a reproduction of a German postcard with an erroneous caption "Krakowskie Przedmieście", which the authors of the publication signed as "the crossroads of Nowy Świat and Krakowskie Przedmieście", while in reality it is an intersection of Jerozolimskie Alley and Nowy Świat Street.

Sometimes mistakes go beyond the area of a given city and then can cause some difficulty for researchers and collectors. I am familiar with two cards of this kind. One shows a fragment of Dietla Park in Sosnowiec, described by the publisher (A.J. Ostrowski's company) as "Belwederski Park in Warsaw", while the other (published by Ś.V.) with the Radziwiłłowska Gate in Biała Podlaska bears a caption "Ministry of Treasury" (ill. 17).

Erroneous captions can also be found in the Polish cards issued after regaining independence. The mistakes are no longer so frequent and so glaring, because the supervision of the publishing process under normal circumstances was certainly more meticulous and no serious company would have allowed

a faulty product to be released on the market. However, there are exceptions. One of them is a card issued ca. 1919 by Franciszek Karpowicz, showing a panorama of the city from the tower of St. Florian›s Church in Praga (ill. 18).

To make the postcard, the publisher used an Aleksander Karoli photograph, taken ca. 1898. The panorama of the city had not fundamentally changed, or at least the changes were not noticeable at this level of generality. The only retouching performed on the illustration concerned the Kierbedzia Bridge, whose two central spans were blown up by the Russians during their retreat in August 1915. However, the publisher mistook the captions and the postcard bears an inaccurate caption: "General view and Kierbedzia Bridge before being blowing up".

Editorial errors did not only concern the usual postcard captions. Mistakes were often made within the reproduced illustration itself, which significantly disturbed the structure of the iconographic message. A truly unique postcard from ca. 1935 (part of the aforementioned series «From K. Wojutyński›s File») is that showing the Kierbedzia Bridge with erroneously retouched spans, after the destruction of World War I and the reconstruction in 1916. In fact, the two central spans were blown up, while the second and third spans were improved in the postcard (ill. 19).

The most common mistake causing the falsification of the structure of the city›s image was the reproduction on postcards of photographs in a mirror image. The inverse directions of printed illustrations resulted mainly from the incompetent use of the negatives. Such errors are not always obvious to the less attentive observer, especially when they concern the space poorly present in everyday consciousness. This is the case of the postcard from ca. 1912 by the Society for the Care of Historical Monuments, defined as: "Old Town Roofs. Old City Square" (ill. 20).

Analysis of the layout of the buildings showed that during the reproduction, the original photograph was reversed and as a result we see its mirror image in the postcard. The photo was taken from the roof of the Baryczków tenement house, the first official premises of the Society (32 Old Market Square), in the northern direction. In the background we see the roofs of the tenement houses at 10, 12 and 14 Krzywe Koło Street. We do not know whether the publisher noticed the mistake and whether he considered it so insignificant to allow the card to circulate. From the point of view of the audience, the correctness of the frame or the recognisability of the tenement houses did not matter much. Far more important was the structure of the composition itself, presenting a rich mosaic of old-town roofs, bringing to mind the atmosphere of the past; the reversed sides added an aura of mystery to it. The fact that the sides were reversed here is conclusively proved by the crayon lithograph by Leon Wyczółkowski (ill. 21), created in a similar period and depicting the same place in an almost identical way.

While the picture with the panorama of the roofs is difficult to verify even today, the next two examples concern familiar venues in Warsaw with a well-

established iconography. In the photographic postcard published ca. 1928 by Wojutyński›s company we see an inverted layout of tenement houses in the Old Town Square (ill. 22). The photograph was taken between 1913 and 1915, as evidenced by the order in the Market Square and the bilingual shop sign visible on the Długoszowska tenement house (no. 9). What immediately raises concerns about the layout of the shot is the tower of the church of Our Lady of Grace (the Jesuit Church) on the left and the exit of Jezuicka Street on the right.

Interestingly, over a decade before, a hand-coloured postcard reproducing correctly the very same photograph had been issued by the same publisher (ill. 23). The company, focused on mass production, offering a wide range of products and gaining maximum profit at limited print-runs, probably factored such mistakes in the overall costs of its operations. Such postcards are an invaluable source for the study of not so much the iconography of old Warsaw as of the level of editorial culture at that time and the mechanisms which governed the publishing market.

Another postcard, from ca. 1938, part of the aforementioned series "Z teki K. Wojutyńskiego", demonstrates an even more compromising case of inadvertent inversion of the reproduced picture. A greatly retouched photograph of Zamkowy Square (ill. 24) shows two most symbolic hallmarks of Warsaw – the Sigismund III Vasa Column and the Royal Castle, whose topographic arrangement would be really hard to mistake.

The last group of editorial mistakes concerns postcards that reproduce iconographic material without proper source verification. There are not many such cases and they are related mainly to the unique character of publishing in the difficult reality of World War I, fostering propaganda and the need to react quickly to the volatile situation on the frontlines, at the same time without adequate photographic material and poor knowledge of the topography of the conquered locations. A case in point is a postcard published by Martin Schlesinger's Berlin-based company, which I discuss in another article[13]. Here the illustration announcing the victorious conquest of Warsaw on 5 August 1915 depicts the Church of the Pentecost and Wolności Square in Łódź.

A more interesting case is the card presenting the alleged moment of blowing up the railway bridge at the Citadel, which is often used in contemporary historical studies. Arguably, the extraordinary popularity of this motif is based on the dynamic way of showing the actual wartime events at the moment they occur on the frontline. Moreover, the reproduction of this photograph excellently fits the propagandistic aim; it was supposed to show the «destructive» way of waging war by the enemy army. At the same time, it satisfied a certain hunger for sensation in the mass audience (ill. 25).

The first postcards with this motif appeared already at the end of August 1915 and in various shapes and forms were produced almost until the end of the war. The iconography of this reproduction derived from a "special photo-

13 P. Głogowski, *Warszawa na kartach pocztowych...*, p. 175.

graph", published in the second issue of *Tygodnik Ilustrowany* (21 August 1915) after the German's entry (ill. 26). It was the matrix for subsequent graphic variations, illustrating the moment of blowing up the bridge (ill. 27).

My doubts were raised not only by the theoretical possibility of a chance photographer taking such a picture, but also by the construction of the bridge itself. The truss of the spans of the railway crossing near the Citadel did not have any iron transverse beams which can be seen in the wartime postcards. Moreover, the Warsaw bridge was built on two rows of pillars, 32 meters apart. Due to the character of the River Vistula, its current and periodical water rise, the pillars of the Warsaw bridge in the south had stone starlings which protected the bridge from the pressure of ice. We can see it perfectly well in a postcard issued by Hersz Piórnik, reproducing a photograph taken before 1908 (ill. 28). These elements ruled out the possibility of the photograph being taken in Warsaw. The next task was to determine the actual location.

Analysis of available iconographic records revealed that this "sensational" postcard was created with the use of a photograph taken in May 1915, showing the moment of blowing up a railway bridge on the River Wisłok in Rzeszów. The bridge was first destroyed in autumn 1914 by the retreating Austro-Hungarian army, then rebuilt by a special engineering division of the tsarist army and then blown up again during the evacuation of the Russians from Galicia. The photograph showing the explosion and all its available graphic variations show the first stage of the demolition of this bridge, which after its complete destruction looked like it can be seen in a postcard issued ca. 1916 by the Tarnów publisher Wilhelm Spiro (ill. 29). Both photographs were taken from about the same place.

Between 19 May and 5 August 1915, a photograph showing the blowing up of a railway bridge on the River Wisłok made its way to Warsaw, to the editorial office of *Tygodnik Ilustrowany*, where it was probably discovered and sent to press after the entry of the Germans. We can suppose that the photograph could have borne a Russian caption: A "railway bridge on the River Wisłok", which by mistake could have been read as: The "railway bridge on the Vistula". The term "special photograph" used by the editorial staff of the magazine may suggest, however, that the falsification of the image was intentional and deliberately executed, perhaps also with the participation of a retoucher, who corrected the sensitive elements in order to add credibility to the tampered image.

For postcard publishers who eagerly reproduced this illustration, the credibility or authenticity of the source material was in fact irrelevant. The reproduced image ideally suited the demand for "authentic" views of war, realized the propagandistic goal of depicting the destructive, or even barbaric, actions of the enemy, and valorised in common consciousness the significance of local events in the history of the Great War.

The examples discussed in this essay do not exclude the illustrated postcard from historical discourse. Although its usefulness as an iconographic

source is highly questionable, its cultural, social and civilization functions seem extremely interesting, if poorly researched to date. The postcard illustration not only multiplied and universalised the image of the urban space, but above all changed our way of perceiving it and influenced our performance within it. Designed as serial publications, postcards defined the directions and character of collectors' activities, privileging complementarity over meaning. The iconosphere of postcards shows the reality of Warsaw like any other city, but at the same time it strongly mystifies it. The preserved images of fragments of the urban space raise questions not only about its hierarchy, but above all the character, role and meaning of the imposed perspective. If we want to use any illustration from the postcard as a historical source, we should not only determine the time lapse between taking the photograph and reproducing it, and analyse not only any publishing interventions, mistakes or credibility of the material, but also the possible cultural, ideological or aesthetic functions assigned to it. The study of the relationship between tampered and actual images is but a starting point for reflections on the nature of the postcard medium. Without a critical commentary, postcards will remain the quintessence of the nostalgia for the "good old days", perpetuating the falsification of the image of the past.

There Was No Such City. The Image of Warsaw in Old Postcards

The abundance and availability of old postcards with views of the city determines the extraordinary popularity of this type of source, not only in contemporary album publications, but also in historical works. In relation to the past of Warsaw, especially experienced by historical cataclysms, postcard iconography also has the status of a valuable memory medium whose role is to supplement the emotional dimension. Analysis of a dozen or so examples of Warsaw postcards shows, however, that this medium has been operating from the earliest years on images subjected to thorough falsification, performed in the name of aesthetization, updating, profit or resulting from editorial errors. Treating postcard iconography as a historical source, we should each time examine thoroughly all possible resources of manipulation, including dating, retouching, mistakes, as well as consciously added ideological values. Critical analysis of the relationship between the crafted and real image is the starting point for considerations about the visual nature and functions of postcards.

Keywords: city, postcard, iconography, Warsaw