

BERLINERBLAU Józef (1859-1935), chemist, industrialist, social activist. He was born on 27th August 1859 in Warsaw, the son of Izydor, a participant in the November Uprising and small metals factory owner, and Dorota née Silberberg.

In 1876, he graduated from the II government *gimnazjum* in Warsaw and, in that same year, began studying at the University of Economics in Dresden and then studied chemistry at the Dresden Polytechnic. He gained his chemical engineering degree in 1882. After completing a one-year internship in the laboratory of Prof. Hulwa in Wrocław, he left for Bern (Switzerland), where he gained his doctorate at that university's Philosophy Faculty. He then became an assistant to Professor of Chemistry Marcel Nencki. Soon after, as an associate professor at the university, he conducted research on the synthesis of organic compounds.

In 1884, he took a vacation to Warsaw and visited the newly-opened "Radocha" factory near Sosnowiec. His recommendations contributed to the removal of defects in the installation which, in turn, led him to being offered the position of the plant's technical manager, a position which he held from 1884 until 1901. The factory made products based on earthen wax (paraffin), which is why, in 1900, he led a scientific expedition to the Caucasus to search for deposits of this raw material. The expedition resulted in the book *Erdwachs, Ozokerit und Ceresin* [Earthen Wax, Ozokerite and Ceresin]. Over many years, this book served as the basis of knowledge about these raw materials.

Thanks to the Oppenheim family, owners of the "Stradom" Częstochowa Textile Plant (his wife's family), who decided that his knowledge and organisational talent could help this plant in the market, in 1901, Berlinerblau was appointed to the board of the "Stradom" Częstochowa Textile Plant and was entrusted with the position of president. Until 1914, he modernised and enlarged the factory using his own patents. Berlinerblau was active in Warsaw in the Chemists' Circle at the Museum of Industry and Agriculture, and in the Society of Technicians. In the evenings and on Sundays, he conducted research in the Wawelberg and Rotwand School laboratory in Warsaw.

He was forced to spend the beginning of World War I in Switzerland, returning to Warsaw at the beginning of 1916. Despite enormous difficulties, he launched the production of twine and fabric from paper yarn in "Stradom". In this manner, he protected the factory from having its machinery seized by the German authorities.

After the end of the war, he left for England, where he obtained a loan to enable "Stradom" to go into full production. He electrified and expanded the factory. He also involved himself in the promotion of flax cultivation in Poland and took part in the preparation of customs and rail tariffs, which had a huge impact of the plant's production profitability. He managed the "Stradom" and "Radocha" factories until the end of his life.

He was active in charity. From 1911, he was a member of the "Aid for Orphans" Society. He was a member of the board of the Textile Industry Union in Łódź and a board member of the Central Union of Polish Industry.

He died on 27th February 1935 in Warsaw (?) and was buried in the Jewish cemetery on ul. Okopowa. He was awarded the Commander's Cross of the Order of Polonia Restituta.

His wife was Helena née Oppenheim (1870-1939), a graduate of the Warsaw School of Drawing. From 1911, she was a member of the "Aid for Orphans" Society. They had four children:

- Aniela Zofia (27th June 1896 Vienna - 22nd December 1988 Warsaw), married name Steinsberg, a graduate of the Law Faculty of the University of Warsaw (1920), in 1931 admitted as an advocate. She lived and worked in Kraków, where her husband Emil Steinsberg (1879–1943) was a recognised lawyer and ran a legal practice. She undertook the defence of socialists and communists. During the war, she worked with the *Żegota* Council to Aid Jews. After the war, she took on the defence of Home Army [AK] soldiers, protesting workers and the fighting members of the opposition. In 1976, she co-founded the *Komitet Obrony Robotników* [Workers' Defence Committee].
- Dorota (1898-1943), married name Seydenmann. She was a painter and a graduate of the School of Fine Arts in Warsaw and the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków and in Paris. She was murdered by the Germans in Nowy Sącz.
- Adolf (1900-1977), a chemical engineer and technical director of the "Stradom" factory. In 1940, he lived in the United States, where he abbreviated his surname to "Berli".
- Tadeusz (1907-1941), an architect and graduate of the Academy of Fine Arts in Kraków. He was employed by Szymon Syrkus in Warsaw. He perished in Lwów, killed by the Ukrainians.

Michał S. Balasiewicz, *Józef Berlinerblau i Jan Prot-Berlinerblau - współtwórcy polskiego przemysłu Polski niepodległej*, "Przemysł Chemiczny" 2013, No. 9, p. 1692-1700; "Nasz Przegląd" 1935, No. 60, p. 14.

Wiesław Paszkowski