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The Book "Churban Czenstochow"

Dr B. Orenstein's work describes the destruction of Cześćochowa, during the dark years of our greatest national catastrophe in exile.

The author set himself the task to encompass, as far as possible, the tragedy of the Cześćochowa Jews in a comprehensive manner. He described it on the background of the pulsating Jewish life in Cześćochowa before the War.

In his work, he analysed all aspects of Jewish life, struggle and destruction during Hitler's times. He provides us with a systematic picture of the *Judenrat* and its activity, as well as of other institutions of the supposed "self-government". We discover very interesting details regarding the Jewish labour and the Jewish *Arbeiterrat* [Workers Council] – a rare institution during the times of the Nazi tyranny. The barracks in the various workplaces, the characteristic *dekoncentracja* [Pol., flustering] of the "dangerous" Jewish working elements by the Germans - all this is described in a detailed manner.

The information about the underground movement and the portrayals of some individual fighters are of great importance.

The accounts of the *akcje* and selections are harrowing. The author also went into further detail as to the fates of the transports deported from Cześćochowa, Ravensbrück, Bergen-Belsen, and so on.

He follows their sorrowful way, with his pen and with his feelings – to Treblinka, Buchenwald, Gross-Rosen, Dora,

He concludes his exhaustive images with the description of the Cześćochowa survivors following liberation, from the first sprouting of an organised Jewish community in Cześćochowa after liberation, as well as of the surviving *Cześćochower landsleit* in Germany.

Orenstein built his work - besides what he personally experienced and lived through - on a great abundance of diligently collected materials of testimonies taken and official documents. True, not always are all these abovementioned sources a complete guarantee of historical, unquestionable objectivity. Testimonies and personal reminiscences are, by their own nature, subjectively coloured. Official German documents, on their part, are full of mendacious fabrications and interpretations. Particularly in the description of the *akcje* and selections, dispassionate objectivity is nearly impossible.

However, when handling such moments, the psychological truth is often more important than the historical one. The best and most loyal of those accounts will often be those that convey the atmosphere and emotional tension of those moments, that were hallowed by the blood and pain of martyrs, and are not just a chronical, indifferent, uninvolved enumeration of dry facts and numbers.

The author's work is not the first on the destruction of Cześćochowa. As may be seen from the bibliography he presents at the end of his book, several articles have been published on the same theme in Poland and Germany. Besides that, two large monographs have been published (in New York and in Buenos Aires, in 1947). Although I have not been able to compare Orenstein's work with those two monographs, I am sure his work provides much new [information] with the abundance of materials that he collected, with his comprehensiveness and descriptions, with his systematic approach and transparent composition of the historical material.

It is a work which constitutes an important contribution to the history of the Holocaust, and is concurrently a worthy and earnest commemoration for the Jewish community of Cześćochowa - for that "City and Mother in Israel" [2 Samuel 20:19], which perished in sanctification of the Name [of God].

Enough!!!

*No! I shall be silent no more,
Nor quietly murmur.
I will not cast down my hands,
But will clench my fists as I desire.*

*Let the enemy wildly circle around me,
Aiming his arrows wherever he wants.
I shall be silent no more,
Nor quietly murmur.*

*Courageously and high will I carry the war flag,
Fighting for freedom and human rights.
Brazenly and loud will I give voice to my word.
Enough! We shall be slaves no more.*

Cześćochowa "Small Ghetto", April 1943

Munich, March 1948