

Memoirs of Cwi Pryłucki (1905–1939)

Summary

Volume 28 of the series is in many ways atypical, because it consists of a single document – a memoir of Cwi Pryłucki, written in the Warsaw Ghetto and preserved in the Ringelblum Archive.

Cwi Pryłucki was born in 1862 in Krzemieniec in Volhynia. Ever since his youth, he was a staunch supporter of the (then nascent) Zionist movement and co-worker of the Hebrew press. Having spent several years in St. Petersburg, he moved to Warsaw in 1905 and began publishing the first Warsaw Jewish daily “Der Weg”. After “Der Weg” was closed, he became a co-editor of the newspaper “Unser Leben” and in 1910 he joined (as editor-in-chief) the editorial board of the daily “Der Moment”, one of the few Jewish newspapers published until the outbreak of World War Two. One of Pryłucki’s assistants, helping him edit the newspaper, was his eldest son Nojeh (1882–1941) – a lawyer, Member of Parliament in interwar Poland, Folkszeitung party activist and a scholar of Jewish language and folklore. In the 1930s, the Pryłuckis lost their influence in the newsroom and the newspaper was eventually taken over by a group of revisionists associated with Vladimir Jabotinsky.

In addition to editorial work, Pryłucki devoted a lot of time to the Zionist movement – he was a member of both Zionist congresses, as well as a member of many associations that advocated Jewish settlement in Eretz Israel. He was also involved socially, for example, he co-organised the Jewish aid committee in Warsaw during World War One. In his memoirs, Pryłucki mentions a number of figures important to the history of Jews in Eastern Europe and Eretz Israel before 1939, such as Horace Günzburg, Mendel Beiliss, Sz. An-ski, Icchak Grünbaum, Meir Dizengoff, *Haim* Arlosoroff, Chaim Nachman Bialik, or the already mentioned Vladimir Jabotinsky.

The memoirs, dictated by Pryłucki to his daughters in the ghetto, have, unfortunately, not been preserved in their entirety. The twelve notebooks that survived in the Ringelblum Archive cover the period 1905–1912. The text bears traces of editing (some passages are repeated), so it cannot be excluded that it was a de facto draft, which was supposed to be edited later. Dates recorded daily on the margins indicate that the work on the memoirs began before 4 May 1940 and was completed on 11 June 1941, that is a year before Pryłucki’s death (he died in the ghetto on 21 May 1942 and was buried in the Jewish cemetery on Okopowa Street – his tombstone has not survived). The circumstances under which the books came to the Oneg Shabbat archive are unknown.

Translated by Jerzy Giebułtowski