

IGNACY CHRZANOWSKI

1866–1940

THE death in the Nazi concentration camp at Oranienburg of the seventy-four year old Ignacy Chrzanowski, "honorowy" professor of the university of Cracow, sent a thrill of indignation and of pride, of grief and of gratitude through the Polish-speaking world. It may be said without fear of contradiction that this unassuming scholar had touched the minds and imaginations of more Polish men and women of the past generation than any ten of his fellows put together. The reason was, of course, his books: in particular his *History of the Literature of Independent Poland*, which has been the vade mecum of students in high schools and universities for half a lifetime.

When the pontifical Stanislaw Tarnowski, scion of a noble line, and champion of aristocracy — in both the good and the bad sense — had left the chair of literature in Cracow vacant, it was a much discussed question who should succeed him — indeed, whether anyone could succeed him. "Young Poland" had already made itself a power, but the older generation still held to the "triple loyalty" program which accepted the fact of the partitions. Tarnowski had told his students, after the première of Wyspiański's *The Wedding*, that "this was not poetry" and had steadily refused to give to Slowacki a place beside his two great contemporaries. The Bishop of Cracow had provoked much comment by refusing to allow the bones of that poet to be brought home to the Cathedral on the Wawel. Everyone felt that this kind of thing could not go on, and yet where was the man to be found who would dare to reverse this way of thinking?

He was discovered in Warsaw, but he had not even a doctor's degree. How could he be brought to the most ancient of Polish universities as successor to the eminent Tarnowski? Fortunately, it was the year of Tannenberg, 1910, and the unveiling of the equestrian statue to King Jagiello in Cracow, the gift of Paderewski, had stirred the imagination of the whole country. The decision was made, and the youthful scholar of only 44 delivered his inaugural. A thronged auditorium listened to his elegant diction and was electrified when he began to quote great passages from Slowacki. The moment was revolutionary, a beginning of new things. Chrzanowski became at once not only a teacher but, as someone has recently said, a national standard under which young and old began to gather and to march. When the future historian of Polish culture will be able to survey the course of events between 1910 and 1920 in its true perspective, he will give a high place to the contribution made to the national life of Poland by a university professor.

In this brief notice only a mention can be made of the legacy Chrzanowski left in the form of published works. The *History of Literature* mentioned above went into a tenth edition in 1930. Already in 1909 he published his work on the Polish satire, three years later came his sermons of Skarga, in 1917 the comedies of Fredro, and in 1928 the poetry

of Krasiński. Simultaneously there appeared a series of pamphlets ranging over the whole field of Polish thinking and expression. But much of Chrzanowski's best thought was put into works where his name did not appear. He edited the *Athenaeum* at Warsaw in 1899–1901, and this was only the beginning. In particular he was one of the chief collaborators in the monumental *One Hundred Years of Polish Thought*, an eight volume anthology of the poetry and prose of the nineteenth century, with extensive biographical materials. From 1906 he was a member of the Academy of Sciences, and did his full share in the work of publication carried on by that body. One of the last tasks he engaged in before the outbreak of war was to assist the editor of the *DNB* to prepare the life study of his old friend Dmowski for the fifth volume which was already in preparation.

Few people were more resolved than Chrzanowski to shun the limelight of political or other public notoriety. He hated appearing on the platform in any other capacity than as a teacher. His political sympathies were consistently national democratic, but were far from accepting many of the wild vagaries of his fellow party leaders. In general he believed in the power of pedagogy, and mistrusted the use of any other force to constrain man or society. Those of us who had the privilege of sitting under him were bound to think of him as a man of romantic idealism. His heart, no less than his head, was in all that he wrote or did. He measured his powers by his purposes, not his purposes by his powers! Nevertheless, when I last talked with him in the autumn of 1936, and put the question to which side he leaned in the struggle between the romanticism of the years before 1863 or the realism of the succeeding generation, his answer was "to the realism." This may be ascribed to advancing years, but it was due also in part to his sense of values. The trouble is that his end belied this confession. The "realist" could certainly have remained in Cracow when his younger colleagues were arrested and deported, and he would then be alive today. The "romantic" refused to be separated from his fellow-teachers, and met his death among them. Greater love hath no man than this!

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MICHAŁ SIEDLECKI

IN the person of Michał Siedlecki, who also died at Oranienburg, the University of Cracow has lost one of its noblest, as well as one of its most distinguished sons. As student and as teacher he was associated with the Jagiellonian school for 45 years without a break. True, he spent the years 1919–1921 as organizing Rector of the University of Wilno; but this was a leave of absence taken under orders, and only from a sense of duty. As student and teacher of biology, his special interest being in the life of the sea, Siedlecki won for himself an international reputation, based not only on research work done as far away as Java, but on the part played at international congresses during a generation, and on his published