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Oponentský posud k diplomové práci

“Židovské instituce v Dolním Slezsku v 50. a 60. letech 20. století”

Bc. Anna Kroupová

In her thesis “The Jewish Institutions in Lower Silesia in the 1950's and 1960's” Anna Kroupová presents a study of the history of Jews in Poland during the first 25 years after the Holocaust. In the three chronological chapters, preceded by a short introduction and succeeded by brief conclusion, the author describes and analyzes the efforts of the relatively small Jewish community in postwar Poland, where about 90% of the prewar population of about 3.3 million Jews had been murdered during the German occupation. The thesis covers political, social, economic and cultural aspects of Jewish life in Poland and puts a regional focus on Lower Silesia, an area which had become part of Poland only in 1945. In the first chapter Ms. Kroupová describes the first efforts to reconstruct Jewish life in Poland immediately after the war until the late 1948, a period, when the pro-Soviet government granted the Jewish community with partial autonomy and when Lower Silesia was singled out as an area, where a significant part of the surviving Polish Jews were settled. The second chapter is dedicated to the period from the introduction of the Stalinist regime in Poland and the liquidation Jewish autonomy by the end of 1940s until the beginning of Destalinization in the mid-1950s. The last chapter covers the period of liberalization in Poland from 1956 until the antisemitic campaign of 1968. The three chapters are divided into subchapters that cover different realms of Jewish life. The structure of the work is transparent and comprehensive. The most noteworthy aspect of the work is its vast source base, which consists of a vast number of archival sources collected in three Polish archives, in particular the collection of the *Towarzystwo Społeczno-Kulturalny Żydów w Polsce*, as well as some of its key activists. In addition, the author consulted a number of contemporary press publications as well as several collections of interviews with witnesses. In addition to these mostly Polish or Yiddish sources, also most of the research literature Ms. Kroupová consulted was published in foreign languages. This is an extraordinary effort for that kind of thesis and shows an enormous personal and intellectual dedication to penetrate the research topic. Despite this dedication, the thesis has some relevant shortcomings: The most important is the lack of a clearly formulated research question, which guides the reader – and would have

guided the author – through the interesting material presented. Without such a guiding thread, which could have been, for instance, a comparison of the situation of Jews in Lower Silesia, with the situation of Jews living in the big cities of central Poland like Lodz and Warsaw, the narrative of the thesis lacks a direction. This in turn has led to two other relevant problems: on the one hand, the conclusion remains indecisive and a clear hypothesis is missing. On the other hand, the work's focus on Lower Silesia fades in the course of the work and is reduced to a minimum in the last chapter.

While Ms. Kroupová analyzed most of the relevant research literature on the field and summarized their outcome in the thesis, she sometimes seems to have difficulties to apply this knowledge interpreting archival sources. For instance, she explicitly mentions how the Antizionist propaganda in Poland significantly increases during the Slánský trial in November 1952 (page 49). A few pages later, Ms. Kroupova describes a purge among the teachers in a Jewish elementary school in Wrocław under the accusation of “Jewish nationalism” in December 1952 (page 55), however both events remain analytically unconnected. Finally, there are some hardly important but easily preventable mistakes in the text: For instance, other than stated on page 48, neither Edward Ochab nor Józef Cyrankiewicz were Jewish. On page 79 she writes about the “students” Karol Modzelewski and Jacek Kuroń during the Antisemitic campaign of 1968, when both had finished their studies already for several years and supported protesting students with their advice.

Without the mentioned shortcomings Ms. Kroupová would have been an excellent work. In its current state it is an ambitious thesis of a diligent and hardworking student that I grade “very good”.

Práci doporučuji přijmout k obhajobě a navrhuji hodnocení velmi dobře.