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[The Book] “Churban Czenstochow”¹

It began with words. I, myself, was sceptically inclined, when Comrade Orenstein proclaimed the idea to publish a book on the destruction of Czeṣtochowa. It is fortunate that Mr Orenstein, as the leader of our *Landsmannschaft's* Central Administration's cultural department, was the one who took this task upon himself, because only a man with an unprecedented stubbornness and a strong, indomitable will could have been capable - despite hindrances from all sides - to complete his honourable and arduous work.

Today, the book *Churban Czenstochow* lays before us completed. Only one, who has looked closer and wormed his way into the hidden cells of Benjamin Orenstein's “laboratory”, is able to appreciate this great achievement. It was no easy thing to gather all the material from people who live in all corners of Germany, to sort them, to elaborate upon them and, finally, to present them before the reader in an accessible and chronological form, as Mr Orenstein has done.

With this book, the author has introduced his method of current historical research. He, firstly, processed all his personal experiences and observations, and sent out dozens of copies to those who could bring something new to each chapter, strike out inaccuracies, make corrections or voice an opinion, accepting each of the comments made by sixty individuals with great gratitude. After receiving these comments, once more, he processed the material and, again, sent out the newly-elaborated manuscripts, until a uniform, complete picture was formed. It is no wonder that it took 25,000 typewritten pages to take the book to print.

Clearly, there will still be Czeṣtochower Jews to be found who, even now, after the book has been published, will have their comments and additions. The author will, of course, keep them in mind in the forthcoming edition. One of the most important remarks, from a great number of readers, will probably be that the first edition of the book has been published in the Latin script. [In] this, the Central Administration has taken into account the fact that -

to our great regret - there is still a great part of the Jews in Germany and overseas for whom it is difficult or who are completely unable to read any quadrilateral Yiddish letters. [This is] bad, but also these Jews must be given the possibility to become acquainted with the book on the destruction of their hometown and of the city of the annihilation of their families.

This book was published for the current generation and for those to come. For generations, who will need to immerse themselves in the gruesome tragedy of a generation, who lived in the most evil era of [all] times, in an era of robbery and murder, in an era of civilised devourers of men, [and] in an era when the symbols of a government were barbarism, death and annihilation.

Perhaps the future generations, absorbing themselves in the era of the past, will erect an eternal monument, not only to the six million annihilated, but also to those who were saved from the cruel hangmen - the survivors who affirmed [that] “the Strength of Israel will not lie!” [1 Samuel 15:29], those who, despite everything, had the sufficient courage, strength and faith to rebuild the nation, its culture and spirit, its power and its independence as a state.

If fate has willed us to be the generation under which oceans of suffering and pain, and oceans of tears and blood have been left, and under which a path of fire and gas has been left - then let the generations, who come after us, know that we have also paved the way to our and their freedom, and that we have carved out the road for the independent Jewish state and for the definitive freedom of our people.

Benjamin Orenstein, the leader of our cultural department, deserves warm thanks for his indefatigable work in publishing this book. If the readers shower him with letters of gratitude and acknowledgement, as well as comments and supplementary information for the new edition in Yiddish characters² - then this will constitute his reward for his labour and efforts.

München, 10th April 1948

¹ [TN: This piece also appears as a prologue to the book “Churban Czenstochow” itself.]

² [TN: We have, as yet, found no mention of this edition in any sources.]