

RYSZARD PIERZCHAŁA

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My most memorable moment from the occupation

At the beginning of August 1944, the Russian-German front came close to the Vistula River and combat operations began. In the Tarłów settlement, a lot of German soldiers gathered. The Nazis placed cannons in the streets and outside town. Fear set in among the people. Some started to dig air raid and artillery shelters, and some started to hide clothes and equipment in their basements. On 3 August 1944, the German authorities ordered the removal of people from Tarłów. The same morning, they started to expel people from their houses to the rallying point at the market square. At the command of the Germans' *raus*, I went out of the house along with my father, mother and older brother carrying bundles of bread. At the square, they lined up all the people and ordered us to go along the road towards the village of Czekarzewie [Czekarzewice]. People started crying and sobbing. Surrounded by army soldiers, they didn't know where they were going or whether they were going to die or be tortured. While walking by Pętkowice village, we managed to escape to the local mill during a distraction, from where we headed over to the neighboring village of Dąbrowa. We also experienced horrible moments there. The Germans organized raids several times a day, during which they arrested men and transported them to camps. The men hid in various hideaways to protect themselves from the raids. On 15 January [1945], the Germans ran away and the Soviet army marched through our country.