

MARIA ŚWIĘTOCHOWSKA

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Memories of the German occupation

In 1939, the Germans declared war on the Soviets [sic!], and we were very much afraid. We expected them to come from the west, but [the Germans] came from the east, from Brześć. For the first time we saw the hideous German faces, we saw tanks, cars passing along our road.

In 1942 [the Germans] came to us from Wisznice by taxi and immediately headed for the barn. They asked grandpa: "What are you hiding here?" And he said: "Nothing." They asked again and grandpa said: "A car" – and they started a search, they looked at the books and ordered dad to help them. When dad was going through the hay, he covered the book *Bitwa pod Grunwaldem* [*The Battle of Grunwald*] and they did not find it. They got a lot of people from Sapiehów and pulled the car out. The vehicle had no wheels, so they arrested everyone and interrogated them, but they all told them the same thing, so we managed to avoid any repercussions. In the evening they came and took [the car].

In 1944, we saw the horrifying glows of fires from Brześć and Biała Podlaska, and the Germans drove nearer. In 1944, they lost the war, but there were still cars and tanks passing through our village, some fled on foot. I was grazing cows in the meadow with my brother and my friend. There were so many Germans that we could not get our cows to the other side of the road. Nobody could come to us from home, because that was impossible. We were afraid to go into the woods, because we could lose our cows, so we decided to stay with the cows all night. At Żuławy, my aunt was staying with one of the farmers – she came to us and we took the cows there, and spent the night. Mum came the next day and we went home. On Saturday, the Soviets released my uncle from prison in Lublin and I was very happy about that. And that was the end of my experiences from [the time of] the German occupation.