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The Germans in Częstochowa

Already by the first day of the War, on Friday, 1st September 1939, it became clear that the Germans were occupying Częstochowa. With staggering force, they ploughed into the Polish military, which withdrew deep inland.

A mood of panic seized the entire population, which followed the retreating military, leaving everything free for the taking. The last trains and private vehicles, travelling in the direction of Warsaw, Kielce and other cities, were overfilled with people.

To escape, as far away as possible, was the only thought of the people, who were filled with fear of the approaching Germans.

On that Friday, before nightfall, thousands of peasants from the neighbouring villages marched through the city on foot and in carts, with their families and livestock and everything which they could only take with them.

The highways and roads so overflowed with wandering masses of people that the retreating Polish army had to make a great effort in order to break a road through in order for its further retreat.

Above the highways, German aeroplanes soon appeared, which descended very low and, with machine-guns, shot at the people who were fleeing in panic, who had abandoned their livestock and belongings in order to save their own lives. Victims immediately fell, their corpses covering the paths of those fleeing.

When the last Polish military divisions had left Częstochowa, the bridges were blown up and the city was cut off for those who, later, wished to set out on the road.

On Sunday, the third day of the War, at ten o'clock in the morning, the first German advance guards and patrols appeared in the city, travelling down the streets in tanks. It was a beautiful summer day. With great caution, the frightened populace began looking out of the windows and, seeing that things were calm, they slowly - albeit hesitatingly - went out onto the streets.

Gradually, the few individual German military personnel approached the civilians and chatted with them, even with the Jews.

That same day, in the afternoon hours, large German military divisions appeared in town. Many of them entered private homes to wash themselves and drink a little water.

The inhabitants immediately realised that the city was under the German occupation and an atmosphere of stress reigned.