

The beginning and end of World War II

Poland, 1945

Lesson
90 minutes

**Additional
material**

**Diaries /
Memoirs**

Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski (born 7 June 1923), also known under his pseudonym Papcio Chmiel, is a Polish comic book artist and journalist. During World War II, Chmielewski served in the Home Army and took part in the Warsaw Uprising. After the war, he started working as a graphic artist, and also published comics.

**Excerpt from Henryk Chmielewski (Papcio Chmiel),
Urodziłem się na Barbakanie, Warsaw 1999**

“Krakowskie Przedmieście [one of the best-known and most prestigious streets of Poland’s capital Warsaw, surrounded by historic palaces, churches and manor houses.] has been burned down. Emptiness. Plac Zamkowy [Castle Square] no longer exists. The castle is a heap of rubble with one stump of one wall protruding. Sigismund’s column has fallen apart and the monument is lying, stuck in the ground. The square is covered with connecting ditches. You can’t get into Piwna Street at all. Through the barricade I get to Świętojanska Street and climb the ruins of the cathedral. From here you can see burned houses in the Market Square and the collapsed Kierbedzia bridge.

There’s a barricade made of flagstones. I cross it to get to Market Square. On Nowomiejska Street in front of house number 11 there’s a figure of Christ, which has fallen from a niche in the wall of the house. (The statue did not return to its place after the house was restored. Today the niche is empty and the statue is located in the basement of the Piarist church).

Above the arches of the Barbican, unveiled in 1938, there are stumps of the house at 20 Nowomiejska St.



Warsaw Cathedral, just nearby the place where
Henryk Jerzy Chmielewski used to live before the War

...I crawl on all fours over the ruins of my apartment. I recognize the burned-out window and the remains of the tiled stove. The sky above my head. I have tears in my eyes. Where is my homework table, where are the books? Where is the box with the white mice? I can see down to the basement. I recognize the skeleton of my niece's burned-out baby carriage. Flower-patterned plates, all smashed; pots ...

This all that's left of the whole apartment.

The moat is filled with grave upon grave. Everywhere there are graves and crosses. I feel like I'm in a cemetery. I attach a piece of paper to the wall: The Chmielewskis are alive; their address is ..."

Photo: <http://tytusromekiatomek.pl/files/barbakan04.jpg>

Source: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henryk_Chmielewski_\(comics\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Henryk_Chmielewski_(comics))

Jeremi Przybora (born 1915 in Warsaw, died 4 March 2004) was a Polish poet, writer, actor and singer.

The eerie liberation of the city's corpse and the eerie parade through its graveyard was a parade of victorious troops marching between two silent rows of ghosts. They thronged, like a silent audience, on the grandstands of the rubble and ruins, lining the route along which the soldiers sent to Warsaw came marching.

489 words

