

## EUGENIUSZ PIĘTA

Class VIb

On 1 September 1939, Poland's bad neighbor on the west, Germany, invaded our country. The German armies, in their green uniforms and with swastikas on their caps and arms, appeared in Łopuszno too. The Polish soldiers fled the Germans in panic, many of them with bandages on their heads, using the side roads and forests. The [soldiers] died defending their beloved homeland, and a great many graves were dug for the heroes in both forests and fields.

The Germans tied up and defiled our Polish eagle, and even shot an arrow through its breast, and thereafter threw it away like filth. In its stead they hung up the swastika, the same that fluttered over Germany. And the Polish nation carried sorrow, sadness and despair in its heart.

The Germans gave an order that Polish schools were to hand over all the books from their libraries to the Inspectorate in Kielce. Our class teacher chose the better books and gave them out to friends and other trusted people, while the less valuable ones were packed up and sent to Kielce, to the Inspectorate.

The Germans destroyed cities, villages and schools. We were no longer allowed to learn Polish history, but we did not lose heart – we continued to study as best we could. All the Polish children from my school had to vacate the building for German children. The Germans wanted to Germanize us, however they did not succeed. When our school was taken over by the Germans, we were forced to study in damp and dark rooms, full of dust and very uncomfortable. Our lot in our beloved homeland was difficult.

When the German gendarmes arrived in Łopuszno, they took up residence in the large, beautiful building that was the property of the squire. And under this building there was a dungeon which the Germans turned into a prison for Poles, and which they occasionally flooded with water. The gendarmes had two Alsatians, which would rip the bodies of Poles to shreds. Not a day went by when they wouldn't bring in or drive in innocent Poles for torture and torment. The Germans treated the Polish nation terribly, like animals. Once they had been tortured, the civilians were taken to a small copse or to a park and executed by firing squad; we could hear only dull groans and shots. The blood of good

Polish patriots soaked into the soil. Some were sent to the prison in Kielce, and from there to the camp in Oświęcim.

One day early in the morning the gendarmes from Kielce and Łopuszno surrounded Łopuszno. That day they drove out the Jews from Łopuszno, setting dogs on them, and the dogs ripped their clothes and bodies; it was a terrible sight to behold, how the Germans treated the defenseless Polish and Jewish population, taking the people away for destruction.

The Gestapo men and gendarmes from Łopuszno then drove to the village of Skałka. Those living there were accused of supplying food to the partisans in the forest and of providing them refuge in their houses. The Germans surrounded the settlement and rounded up all the residents in one house, which they then doused with petrol and set on fire. They took out their revenge on small children, and threw them into the flames. Only those survived who jumped into the well or the pond. One girl had a dream that the Germans would burn down the village of Skałka, and so she took down the icon of the Mother of God of Częstochowa and covered herself with it behind a barn. The Germans, although they walked close by, did not see her – they must have been blinded, because the Lord wanted to spare her from torment. The Mother of God of Częstochowa shielded her with her cloak of light. Those who were in the ponds or the wells witnessed this German crime. In 1945, Russian and Polish armies entered Poland. The people took to arms and helped the Russians disarm the Germans. Poles crushed the German swastikas, and untied the wings and legs of the Polish eagle, which fluttered its wings above the country and the Polish nation.

Even today still the walls of many dungeons are covered with the blood of tortured Poles who so loyally served their beloved homeland. The song which the Germans forbade Polish children from singing is now forever on our lips: "Poland has not perished yet, So long as we still live".