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Class 7

Elementary School No. 2 in Hrubieszów

My wartime experiences

I was just a little girl, only eight years old, when the Germans treacherously invaded Poland on 1 September 1939. Despite the immense bloodshed and the heroic efforts of Polish soldiers, the numerically superior German forces crossed the Polish border and moved deep into the country. Learning that the Germans were advancing ever further, everyone became gripped by trepidation and fear. After a few weeks they had occupied the whole of Poland, entering among others our town. The streets were alive with movement. The Germans drove around the town. The local populace looked at them with fear and terror. The invaders smiled at us derisively. Years passed in terror. When they ruled in our country, the Germans deported and executed the Homeland's best sons. They shot dead all of the Jews.

The year 1941 came, and on 22 June the Hitlerite army invaded the USSR. It crossed the border in triumph, occupying Volhynia, Podolia and the Ukraine, driving deep into the country. At this time Ukrainian gangs started appearing in Volhynia, and they murdered the Polish population with great cruelty. They soon moved closer to our township. Terrible murders were committed. Entire villages were burned to the ground. We all trembled with fear. Many a night I would sit by my house and look at the villages burning all around. These were terrible times.

In order not to become a victim of one of the Ukrainian gangs, I left for Warsaw. But there was no peace there either. Frequent air raids disturbed the silence. During the bombings I would sit in a corner of the cellar, trembling with fear. I thought that a bomb might fall and slaughter us all, turning the tenement into a ruin. And I would think about my family, so far away from me.

After two months I returned to Hrubieszów. In the meantime, the Germans had been defeated at Stalingrad, and their armies started to withdraw, hounded by the Red Army. A week after my arrival, the Red Army entered our territories, and with it came the Polish Army. We greeted the soldiers with joy, for they had freed us from years of bondage.