

## M. DŁUSKI

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1st grade of high school

### How we studied during the occupation

The outbreak of the Polish-German war thwarted all my plans for the future. Having completed my education at a middle school, I intended to enroll in a high school to continue my studies. But things turned out differently! The oppressive hand that attacked the freedom of our homeland also became an obstacle to my plans and aspirations. The enemy, who strove with all his might to eradicate Polishness, also did not allow the minds of young people to be shaped. Education in high schools was banned because it was well understood that these were the very torches and fires that enlightened and ignited, and at the same time, spurred youthful minds to action. The high school proved to be an inconvenient and hostile tool for the oppressor, as it focused intensely on nurturing national thoughts and preparing future clear-thinking citizens imbued with the spirit of patriotism. The enemy sensed this accurately! Education was restrained! The prominent representatives of science were imprisoned and then transported to camps, where most of them gave their lives, so precious to the homeland and beneficial to the youth. Despite being persecuted and restrained by various decrees, the high school continued to exist in hiding. Risking great danger to the students, it persisted because it had to fulfill its mission, had to accomplish its task, which was encapsulated in a brief program: "To educate and prepare the young generation for future life and make them healthy-thinking citizens of the Polish nation. To prevent the young minds from being drained." The educational forces, keeping in mind the above principle, or rather goal, did not spare any effort and eagerly engaged in teaching the youth, even though this education posed many difficulties and was an extraordinarily risky and dangerous act. The enemy was lurking, and his eyes and invisible tentacles were tracking and searching for those "meetings" where young people, eager to learn, quickly absorbed the professors' lectures.

Today, one hears statements that, for instance, education was only accessible to a certain group of young people; that not everyone could attend the so-called clandestine classes. It is clear that this had to be the case, but the factor that forced it was precisely

the fear of the enemy. Moreover, the lack of appropriate premises did not allow for a larger number of students. But a more important reason was that it was easier for smaller groups to escape the eyes of the enemy, who tried by all means and forces to destroy and eradicate these centers of youth education, especially the youth of a nation that never compromised with the enemy and stood firmly by its views and traditions. Therefore, the above, unjust statement of the present times is unfair. Rather, one should admire the courage and will of the professors, who were constantly at risk of death, or at the more lenient imprisonment or concentration camps, which usually, as an ultimate result of various persecutions, comprehensible only to the German mind, ended in death, which during the occupation harvested an extraordinary crop from Polish soil. We are glad to be able to learn freely. We can focus more on our lessons, assured that no one is lurking and threatening our young lives, which will strive for and desire only a strong homeland, and with the experience of the past, will not allow a similar fate to befall future generations.