

WIESŁAW WESOŁOWSKI

Class 7

Zwierzyniec, 12 June 1946

My experiences from the period of occupation

It happened on Friday, 1 September 1939. At 6.00 a.m. the German planes arrived and bombed the gun powder factory in Jasło, where my daddy worked. A couple of hours later we went to the town, where we learned that the Germans had declared war on Poland.

On 3 September we went to Zwierzyniec, but while we were on our way there, between Rzeszów and Jarosław we encountered German planes, which were bombing trains and railway tracks. After three days of suffering and fear, we arrived in Zwierzyniec. For eight days we were running to the forest in Zwierzyniec, to hide from bullets and bombs. Then the Germans came to torment people. Groups of partisans gathered in the forests to stand up against the Germans. The occupier responded by setting up concentration camps and prisons. A concentration camp established in Zwierzyniec held about 13,000 people from Zwierzyniec and other towns.

I remember 1 June 1942, when I saw several hundred corpses of people who had been killed by the Germans in Sochy. A few people who survived had no roof over their heads, because the whole village had been burned down.

For unknown reasons, the Germans burned down the village of Wywłoczka on 1 April 1942. They took the inhabitants to a camp, and later released some of them and sent the rest to Germany for labor.

It was a sad sight, when Jews were being escorted by the Germans and Ukrainians. The Jews were dying due to exhaustion and hunger, some were shot by the people who escorted them.

During the occupation I was several years old, so I was allowed to study, while other boys – those over the age of 14 – had to work hard and fear frequent round-ups, because they could have been deported to Germany.

From April to 21 June, the German troops were marching towards the Soviet border. On Sunday, 21 July, the Red Army came to Kosobudy with the Polish Thaddeus Kosciuszko units that liberated Poland.