

## BOGUSŁAW MAŁYSZEK

Class 6

Elementary School in Kocudza Dolna

District of Biłgoraj

school year 1945/1946

### My wartime experiences

In 1939, accompanied by my mother, I left the village of Prudy in the district of Stołpce for a holiday in Łańcut. Daddy went to Wilno to take an exam. We were in Łańcut when the Polish–German war broke out. After daddy returned from his exam, he went to the war. While in Łańcut, I lived through a German air raid. We lived close to the railway station. During the bombing I, my mother and my younger brother, Romuś, were in a nearby village. German bombs fell thick and fast all around us. The German army entered Łańcut right after the attack. I stayed in Łańcut for a few months and then went to my aunt in Opole. After two years I returned to my parents, who were then living in Goraj (District of Biłgoraj). Mummy worked at the post office, while daddy was a teacher.

In September 1942, when I was in Frampol, I heard the sirens go off. At the same time, I saw the Frampol fire brigade driving in the direction of Goraj. Seeing the fire engines, I wanted to go to Goraj, but daddy ordered me to return home, and himself went to Goraj in one of the trucks. I and some other boys walked outside the town to take a better look. The next day a few carts with German soldiers drove into Goraj. In the afternoon I was told that the Germans who went to Goraj had rounded up one hundred people. I waited anxiously for them to lead these people through Frampol. And finally they came – I looked to see if my daddy was among them, but he wasn't.

Sometimes, while reading about the history of Poland and the heroes who readily gave their lives for the Homeland, I dreamt of the country's independence. At the time, I would have gladly given my life for my beloved Homeland to regain its independence and shimmer with freedom like in years past.

One night, when I was going to bed, I heard someone crawling over the fence and into the courtyard, and soon after I heard the clink of a windowpane – a partisan stood in the window,

in the uniform of a Polish soldier. He shouted: "Open up!". All the shutters were opened at the same time, and rifle barrels appeared in the windows. Uncle ran to open the door. Five partisans entered the post office. They blew out the lamp and ordered us all to lie down on the floor. When we did so, they tore the telephone off the wall and took it with them. As they were leaving, they told us to get up and light the lamp.

In the beginning of June 1944, we saw a few German planes flying towards the village of Łada. Soon after we heard loud booms from that direction. When I went outside, I was told that the aircraft were bombing Łada. Expecting an air attack on Goraj, we moved to the village of Bononia. Around noon, when we saw that the planes were flying off and the people returning, we went back to Goraj.

Until July 1944, life was more or less peaceful. Towards the end of July (23, 24 and 25) Goraj was filled with German forces retreating from the Soviets. In the evening of 25 July, foreseeing danger, we left Goraj for the nearby village of Bononia.

Around noon on 26 July, we heard two loud booms from the direction of Frampol, and also the whine of bullets being fired towards German forces near the village of Zagroda. I and the woman in whose house I was hiding went to a shelter. The bullets were falling thick and fast around us. One fell behind the fence which was no more than two meters distant from our refuge. More and more bullets fell near us (we were close to the German supply column). I was certain that we would not get out of this alive, from this hail of bullets. And so I started praying to God, convinced that only he could save us.

We then left the shelter and tried to get to the pits. When we came out of the shelter, we saw that Goraj and Bononia were burning brightly. The Germans were fleeing through the fields. The Germans saw us along the way and started shooting at us. So we lay down on the ground and started crawling forward. We got up on our feet only when we reached the cover of some bushes. But the Germans, who were lying in the pits, must have seen us moving and started shooting in our direction. An artillery shell fell not far from us, some 50 meters away. Bullets and shells continued to race by overhead. When everything fell silent, we walked out into the fields and saw Soviet army patrols. The soldiers whom we met asked whether we had seen any Germans.

After the battle, my parents and I went back to Bononia. Mummy and daddy immediately walked to Goraj, while I stayed behind and looked at a Russian tank. At nightfall, the Germans

launched an attack on Goraj. Hearing the booms and seeing the soldiers ducking for cover, I started running to the shelter. In the shelter was a woman, some refugees from the Poznań region (with two paralyzed men on wheelchairs), and my brother. I was worried about my parents, who were in Goraj at the time. Luckily, they returned a moment later. The thuds and booms caused the ground to shake. A hail of shells flew over our heads. Just as I had done before, I started praying earnestly to God. Slowly, it became quiet. At around 8.00 p.m. the Germans withdrew from Goraj. When we returned to Goraj, we found that our house had been reduced to rubble. After two days with nowhere to live, we moved into a small flat.

Daddy worked as a teacher throughout the occupation, and whenever the Germans came to Goraj, he would send the children home and himself flee. He would flee even when a German inspector, known as the “Schulrat”, turned up at the school.