

## FRANCISZEK SZYMCZAK

Franciszek Szymczak

Class 6

Wola Uhruska, 1948

### My wartime experiences

In 1939, the eternal enemy invaded Polish soil. The trains were overflowing with people fleeing eastwards from German looting. After a short struggle, the Germans occupied our land. At school, we were not allowed to learn from Polish books or [gain knowledge of] history. There were constant arrests of Poles. They were taken to concentration camps. And so Polish patriots died in camps and prisons. Poles tried as quickly as possible to go abroad to continue fighting for their country, hoping that Poland would one day be free and independent. Then, in mid-June 1944, the Poles had to fight the Germans. The days of June were very beautiful. From the east, the ground trembled from the whirr of cars and the roar of cannons. The roads shook from the rasp of tanks. From the distance, you could see whole villages [standing] in flames, which the Germans, giving way, set on fire. For three days there was a great deal of movement. The Germans were running around angry and enraged. An order was given by the Germans to leave the village. There was a lot of movement in Wola [Uhruska]: some people were leaving for the forest, while others disregarded the order and did not leave. We packed our belongings in bundles and buried the rest in a pit. We harnessed a horse to a cart with bundles and left for the forest. There was a fierce battle in Wola [Uhruska] until the Soviet troops crossed the Bug River. On 25 June the Soviet troops, together with Poles, crossed the Bug River and were already in Wola [Uhruska]. After a three-day wandering in the forest, we returned to the village. Wola [Uhruska] was full of Soviet soldiers, whose presence we were very pleased with.