

## WŁADYSŁAW HACZKIEWICZ

Class 6

Horodło, 1946

### The day of the fight by the river Bug

It was in 1939 that the Germans started to attack those of our soldiers who were on the right bank of the river Bug. My dad died then and my mum took care of me and my younger brother at my granddad's house in Zosin.

The day was cloudy, horrible, full of dread and grief. Not a single bird took off into the sky to sing its birdy song, not a single butterfly fluttered its bright wings, not a single hare poked its nose out from the meadow. It seemed that all of nature had died, and only the trees, moving their little leaves, rustled sullenly and mournfully, as if they were crying for the country, for the mother that had raised them. Only the dog whined quietly in his kennel and the cows in the barn lowed miserably. Everything was dour and dismal.

We saw only fire and heard only gunshots all around us. I too was aggrieved by the sight around us, even though I was only eight years old at the time. That dread of war and fire even knocked the smaller children off balance. We hugged our loved ones and cried helplessly, praying for God to look after us.

The shooting stopped for a moment. My brother, my uncle and I all ran along a path from the road to a hill in a field. We wanted to see what was happening, what damage the artillery had done to the field.

We had only gone a few steps when we heard some kind of groaning in the distance. This awoke my childish curiosity and I ran into the corn from which I had heard the groaning. I looked and there was a heavily wounded soldier in a Polish uniform. He looked at me with a pleading expression and said he wanted water in a barely audible voice. I quickly ran home and brought some water to the thirsty man. He thanked me with a look, as if saying: "Boy, you've saved my life."

My uncle and his friend took the soldier carefully, changed him into civilian clothes, patched his wounded leg and sheltered him under their roof. Germans troops and tanks were

marching and driving along the road. The soldier recovered after a few days and set off for his own home dressed as a simple traveler. He hugged me before he left and thanked us for the first aid, saying: "See you later, young lad, in a free country."