

ZYGMUNT MAKAREWICZ

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Class VI

Wisznice, Włodawa district, Lublin voivodeship

21 June 1946

Memories of the German occupation

When the war between Poland and Germany broke out, many refugees passed nearby. The war started on 1 September 1939. Early in the morning, German planes appeared over Biała Podlaska, dropped some bombs and destroyed the aircraft factory. In a few days German tanks were passing through Wisznice. After a few days, German planes appeared over Wisznice and when they started dropping their bombs, they exploded and black smoke rose in the air. We thought that the entire village would burn. In a few weeks' time the whole of Poland was under German occupation.

In 1940, the Germans were getting ready to fight the Soviets, [and] in 1941, they officially declared war. On Sunday, 20 June, it was still quiet at dawn, but the silence was suddenly broken by windows shaking. We all ran out of the house. We saw a cloud of smoke in the blue, eastern sky. Planes were still circling over Biała Podlaska. German planes flew eastwards in squadrons. On Sunday during lunchtime several Soviet bombers came and bombed Biała Podlaska, but German fighters shot them down. One plane fell down near Wisznice and one farmhouse burned down. One of the pilots jumped out, but his parachute did not open and he died. The second plane crashed in Żeszczynka. It dropped five bombs near us, about half a mile away.

The Germans went deeper into the Russian lands, capturing one city after another. It seemed like they were going to capture the whole of Russia, and even the entire world.

When the Germans were at war with Russia, bandits used to roam our area. There was not a single thing that they did not go through. During the daytime the German gendarmerie or Gestapo men came. If somebody did not hand over their quotas, they took the farmers to the concentration camp or to Majdanek.