

RG-50.670.0011

Interviewed on October 3, 2011

Summary

Ilona Éles Halász (Halász Sándorné Éles Ilona), born April 7, 1935 (no POB), a retired elementary school teacher.

She grew up in the small town of Namény (Vásárosnamény, eastern Hungary). Her grandfather was a farmhand on the Friedlender estate outside of the town, her mother was the housekeeper of the Calvinist pastor. She spent the week with her mother at the parish, in the middle of the town, and the weekends outside of town where her grandparents lived.

She was interviewed about her memories of the anti-Jewish measures and deportation in 1944 in the town. She was in third grade of the elementary school at the time, i.e. nine years old.

She does not remember any indication that something would happen to the Jews. In third grade she noticed that some children appeared with the yellow star on their coats. She thinks it was around November (In fact: April 1944). However, not all Jewish children wore the yellow star. There were few Jewish children in her class, because most of them went to the Jewish school, the "Haider school." When the children asked the teacher why some children wore the Jewish star, no proper explanation was given but the teacher told them not to make fun of anyone. An air of secrecy surrounded the issue. She only remembered the name "Genát" when asked about names of Jewish classmates. One morning her mother sent her to the store in the middle of the town, where the market was usually held, and she saw ten horse-driven carriages. She recognized some of the local Jews; one woman with a baby in swaddling clothes, a Mrs. Zeltzer (Seltzer) remained in her memory. She sensed that something bad had happened and felt sorry for the mother and baby. She does not remember any uniformed men being there, only some officials. The carriages left on the Kraszna [river] bridge toward Beregszász. Her mother could not provide any explanation, but the pastor accompanied the Jews to the bridge, waved to them with his kerchief, and upon his return with tears in his eyes said: "Now, these poor people left." She does not remember whether the Jews in the carriages wore the yellow star. Names she remembered: Zeltzer, Roth, Friedlender, Ziegler. The local Jewish stores were locked. She said that the Jewish homes were sealed and guarded by gendarmes. The furniture was taken to the synagogue (she also saw that in Beregszász on a visit there), and she does not know what happened to household items and clothing. The latter she saw piled up and guarded by excise officers on the courtyard of the kindergarten, but then the clothing disappeared. She remembered that several local Jews fled before the deportation, some to Budapest, and survived the lagers and came back to town, like the Winkler and Friedman families. She did not remember well what happened to them, because after 1949 she was away for teacher training, and after that she taught in Tarpa. Some of the Jews changed their names to Hungarian sounding ones, like Várkonyi.

After the war, she heard from other people what had happened to the Jews, how they were burned. She also visited Buchenwald and was shocked and saddened by the experience. She always told her pupils about her Buchenwald experience.