

RG.50.944.0025

February 19, 20, 22, and 24, 2017, Budapest, Hungary

Summary

Veronika Forrás, born Klein, 1926, Perbenyik (Pribenik), Czechoslovakia. Her father was Márton Klein, who owned a general store in the village, her mother, Julianna Glanz, helped out in the store. They had Klein relatives in the village, her cousins, Erzsike and Lilike, who were her best friends. She went to a Hungarian school, but also had Slovak friends. There were only five or six other Jewish families in this small village.

Her mother's family: grandparents and six siblings lived in Bályu, Carpatho-Ruthenia (Bat'ovo, Ukraine), only an hour by train from Perbenyik. She spent almost every weekend with her widowed grandmother, Lina Glanz (born Stark). Her grandfather, Hermann Glanz was a landowner, but he lost his holdings after WWI and died early. The family had a big house and garden in the village, and also a general store in the house, managed by her uncle, Gustav and her grandmother. Bályu was a bigger village than Perbenyik, and there were many Jewish families. She remembered Falkovics, Stark, and Weisz.

The Klein and Glanz families were not orthodox and not very religious, but they celebrated the high holidays and identified as Hungarian Jews.

In 1935, her family moved to Budapest where her father became partner in a small women's lingerie business. First, they lived in Munkás St, then in Dembinszky St.

She began the Jewish high school when she was ten years old. She liked the school, which had excellent teachers, especially after the anti-Jewish laws took effect and Jewish teachers were not allowed to teach elsewhere. One of her best friends was a second cousin, Vera Glanz, and she remembered Gizella Deutsch, another friend.

In 1938, her mother died suddenly. She was only twelve at the time. She spent a year with her grandmother in Bályu. Her father remarried after one and half years: Erzsébet Zichermann, a divorcee who had a daughter, Zsuzsa Hirsch, Veronika's junior by four years. She did not get along well with her stepmother and stepsister. They moved to the stepmother's apartment in Klauzál St. 32. The building had Jewish and non-Jewish dwellers.

In summertime, she visited her grandmother.

In 1940 [correctly: 1939], Hungarian troops reoccupied Bályu [Carpatho-Ruthenia]. The Hungarian population welcomed them, and most of the Jews too. Those, however, who were in service of the Czech administration lost their jobs. Veronika remembered a demonstration with the slogan: "Work and bread, or Czechs come back!"

In summer 1941, at the beginning of a visit to an aunt and a cousin, she witnessed her grandmother and uncle with luggage being marched in a long line toward the railway station. She said they were taken either to Kőrösmező (Yasinya) or Ökörmező (Mizhhirya) but they were released a day later. They were very frightened.

She remembered of the Germans occupation of Budapest in [March] 1944; she and her family were visiting her stepmother's sister. She was upset because the German occupation prevented her meeting her date that afternoon, a young man whom she had met a week earlier.

Her father was already in forced labor, but after a short time in a village, he was stationed in Budapest, in the basement of a church on the Square of the Roses. He usually was allowed to spend the weekends at home. One weekend in August 1944, he did not come home, but

someone from his unit brought the news that he had died during the bombardment the day before.

Since summer [June] 1944, they lived in a Yellow Star house in Klauzál St, cater-cornered from their old building. Her stepmother's hairdresser shared her apartment with them, and with the family of her stepmother's sister. They had to wear the Yellow Star. She said they did not always wear it if they remained in the neighborhood, but they could only leave in the morning hours. They socialized within the building. Her friend, Irénke Oszmán (survived Ravensbrück) lived there and some cousins as well. They were Miklós Klein (died in forced labor) and Károly Klein, a medical student. She and her family heard all kinds of rumors, and she heard about Endre and Baky [state secretaries in the Ministry for Internal Affairs, in charge of the deportations]. Everybody was fearful, but they never thought that they would be taken out of the country.

The Arrow Cross coup and Szálasi's takeover frightened them.

One morning, at the beginning of November 1944, women aged 16-38 had to gather in the courtyard at the order of Arrow Cross men. On a previous occasion they had to do the same, when they were marched to the KISOK sports arena [14th District in Budapest], but released the same day. This time she took her suitcase again, but did not even take a winter coat, just a sweater and a light suit jacket. First, they were marched to the brick factory in Óbuda, which was extremely crowded. They spent a night there. She knew one of the gendarmes through her father's business and asked him whether he would help her escape, but he declined. The next day, the very long column of women began walking on the main road leading from Budapest to Vienna. It was cold and rainy all the time. They stopped every night in different towns; Dorog, Gönyű, Harka, she remembered. They usually spent the night in barns or stalls. In Dorog, a woman offered to rescue her, but she did not want to leave her stepsister and cousins behind. Initially, they had some food that they took from home, but the food quickly ran out. Some Christians along the road were sympathetic, others gleeful at their plight. She usually was close to the head of the column, sometimes hearing gunshots at the back: those who fell behind were shot. After about a week or more, they reached the border town, Sopron. From there, they were sent to Kópháza [ca. 7-8 km from Sopron] to dig fortifications. They witnessed the bombing of Sopron. They stayed for about a month, sleeping in barns, 60 women together. There was very little food. Sometime toward the end of December, they were transported, by train to Lichtenwörth [sub camp of Buchenwald, close to Vienna], Austria. They did not work there. She was very weak, could not walk any longer. Not her family members, but two women from the Délvidék (Southern Region), Irén and Pepi protected her, brought her food that they had gotten from local Austrians when they sneaked out of the camp. The German *Oberscharführer* (senior squad leader) who guarded them did not punish those who foraged for food. Russian troops liberated them [in April 1945]. Irén and Pepi managed to get a horse drawn carriage from the Russians. They put her on the carriage and they began their journey home. From Sopron, they traveled on a top of a train carriage to Budapest. She went to the apartment where they lived last. Veronika had typhus. Her stepsister found her and alerted her two maternal aunts, who had survived in Budapest. Her stepmother did not survive. She had to be taken to the Saint László Hospital for several weeks. Afterward, her aunts took care of her. Her fever did not abate, and, with the help of her cousin, Károly Klein, she was diagnosed with and treated for TB. Later, it turned out that she had TB in her bones as well.

She found out that her grandmother and other relatives in Bályu had all perished. She married and had a daughter. She became a fashion designer.

In the fourth part of the interview, the interviewer played the taped interview of Gizella NYESTE, a 103-year-old Christian woman who lived all her life in Bályu, with Veronika Forrás. Mrs. Nyeste remembered the Glanz family, and many other Jewish families as well: Weisz, Stark, the butcher, Miksa Blum, the shoemaker, Svéd, the tinsmith, Vogel, Landermann, the tailor, Moskovics, Falkovics, and Hollander, the grocers, Grünfeld, the physician who had two sons, Landesmann, the cabinet maker, who made a crib for her, when her son was born in 1933. She said that she had good relationships with Jews. She invited Jewish girls to her wedding as well.

She and her husband bought the property for their house from the Weisz family in the 1920s. Mrs. Nyeste remembered that her relative, Kálmán Nyeste and Zoltán Tuba hid three forced laborers in the Friedmann estate. The Friedmanns were related to the Glanz family and they bought the estate from Veronika's grandfather after WWI.

Veronika Forrás validated many of Mrs. Nyeste's reminiscences.