

## Gitli David Levi During The Holocaust



Here I am 13 years old and as you can see on the photo I am wearing the disgraceful yellow star. So the picture was taken in 1943 in Vidin [port city on the right bank of the Danube in Bulgaria, 220 km. away from Sofia].

At that time I graduated from junior high school. I did not have a bat mitzvah because those were tumultuous times, the country was in chaos, the Law for Protection of the Nation [A comprehensive anti-Jewish legislation in Bulgaria was introduced after the outbreak of World War II. The 'Law for

the Protection of the Nation' was officially promulgated in January 1941] was already adopted etc. At that time Jews did not have the right to own shops and factories. Jews had to wear the distinctive yellow star; Jewish houses had to display a special sign identifying it as being Jewish; Jews were dismissed from all posts in schools and universities. Exactly at that time I already knew my future husband Mayer Rafael Alhalel as a neighbor. Although we had been classmates in the Jewish school, we had never had mutual friends.

When I graduated the Jewish school (it was until 4th form, equivalent to present-day 4th grade) I was the only pupil to continue my education in the girls' high school in Vidin, but I did that a year later, because according to the Law for Protection of the Nation Jewish children were not allowed to study in Bulgarian schools. When the Law for Protection of the Nation came out in 1942 a disgusting man appeared in the Jewish neighborhood, Ivan Zviara [meaning 'the Beast']. I witnessed how he banished our neighbors, the Pizanti family, from their own house. They were five of them and they had to sleep in the hen-house. They slept on the floor, without being able to enter their home or use their belongings. People said that the same fascist and evil Bulgarian, Ivan Zviara, went to the Aegean Sea when the Germans led the Aegean Jews [The Treaty of Neuilly, imposed by the Entente on Bulgaria after WWI, deprived the country alongside with its WWI gains (Macedonia) also of its outlet to the Aegean Sea (Aegean Thrace) that had been a part of the country since the Balkan Wars (1912/13). King Boris III (1918-43) joined the Axis in 1941 with the hope to be able to regain the lost territories. The oppressive Bulgarian administration resulted in uprisings in both occupied lands. Jews were persecuted, their property was confiscated and they had to do forced labor. Although the Jews in Bulgaria proper were saved, they were exterminated in the newly gained territories. Over 11.000 Jews from the Bulgarian administered northern Greek lands (Thrace and Macedonia), mainly from Drama, Seres, Dedeagach (Alexandroupolis), Gyumyurdjina (Komotini), Kavala and Xanthi were deported and murdered in death camps in Poland. About 2.200 Jews survived.] sacrificed by King Boris III [The Third Bulgarian Kingdom was a constitutional monarchy with democratic constitution.] to the ships, which transported them to the Maydanek concentration camp [Fascist concentration camp established in Maydan Tatarski, 4 km southeast of Lublin, Poland in 1940. From 1942 to 1944 1,38 million people, mostly Jews, were killed there. It was destroyed by the Red Army in July, 1944.]. People also said that returning from there Ivan Zviara brought back so many unnecessary clothes and things that his wife did not know what to do with them or what they were used for.