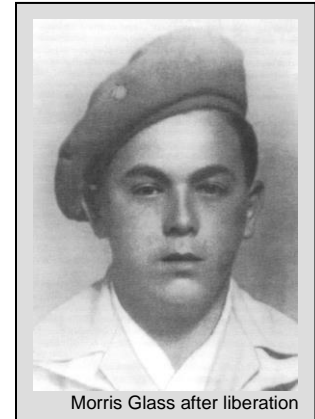


■ HITLER'S RISE ■ YOUNG JEWS BECOME AWARE

When did young Jews in Europe become aware of the rising threat from Hitler and his Nazi Party? From the Nazis' growing presence in the 1920s to Hitler's takeover in 1933, how did young people learn "what was going on"? These five survivors were 5 to 13 years old when Hitler came to power in January 1933. At the time they lived in Germany, Poland, France, and Austria (the latter three would be taken over by Germany). Here they recall the early warnings that their families faced deep danger.

MORRIS GLASS (born 1928, Poland; five years old when Hitler came to power). My father had an uncle, Bernard, who moved to Germany in the 1920s. At that time, Germany had a democratic government and a tolerant society, and Uncle Bernard settled down, established a medical practice, and raised his family there. Bernard thought highly of Germany; in fact, he considered himself to be German. But his life there began to change in 1933 when Hitler gained power and the Nazis began to exclude the Jews from German life and to persecute them. Finally, in 1938, the Nazis expelled all Polish-born Jews and forced them to return to Poland; among those exiled were Bernard and his son Max. My father met them at the border and brought them to live with us. Neither survived the Holocaust. Despite his suffering at the hands of the Nazis, Uncle Bernard proudly admitted to being a German.



Morris Glass after liberation

___Morris Glass and Carolyn Murray Happer, *Chosen for Destruction: The Story of a Holocaust Survivor*, 2011

BARBARA LEDERMANN RODBELL (born 1925, Germany; eight years old when Hitler came to power). I remember my childhood in Berlin as being wonderful. My father loved Berlin, and we went all over Berlin as soon as I could walk. He showed me absolutely everything, every little corner. He liked history and music and we went to museums. We always went to Holland on vacation. In 1933 when we went to Holland on vacation, one of my father's cousins, Uncle Biet Pierson, who was a journalist, an editor of a newspaper in The Hague, told my mother that he felt we should not go back home. When Uncle Biet was 19 and just learning to be a journalist, he had been sent to Munich [Germany] to cover a trial. Nobody in Holland had paid any attention to



USHMM/Barbara Ledermann Rodbell
Barbara Ledermann in Amsterdam, ca. 1936

"You pay attention to this trial. This is going to end up being something quite awful and everybody better pay attention." It was Hitler's trial in 1924.

this trial. When he came back and wrote up his report, they said to him, "Why are you making such a fuss?" And he said, "You pay attention to this trial. This is going to end up being something quite awful and everybody better pay attention." It was Hitler's trial in 1924.*

* Hitler was tried and convicted of treason in 1924 after the failed Beer Hall Putsch in Munich in November 1923, in which he and his Nazi followers attempted to take over the government of Bavaria, a region of Germany. He was sentenced to five years in prison but was released after nine months. While in prison he wrote his infamous *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*).

He was the only one of them who paid any attention to it. It took ten years until things really heated up. So my mother said to my father, “I think we shouldn’t go back.” And my father said, “What does a lawyer do in a foreign country? What am I going to do?” And she said, “You’ll find something to do. I really think we should not go back.” And so my father said, “Well, I’m going to go back and see what I can do.” He’d already been a lawyer for 25 years. It was practically impossible for him to start over. So he returned to Berlin and went to his office, and there were his secretaries and assistants. There was also a big letter from the government, which said that from then on he could have only Jewish clients. My father had very few Jewish clients. He had big companies that were his clients, and now he could not represent them anymore. He packed up.

So then my father came back to Holland and worked for a Dutch lawyer, but he had to learn Dutch, of course. He handled the clients who were very much like him, who had come to Holland and couldn’t practice because they didn’t have the Dutch degree. So he went to the university and graduated in three years in a foreign language. It was very hard. He also worked at the same time. We were very proud of him. There was a big party and everybody came. Then a few years later the Germans invaded, and it was all over.

___Barbara Ledermann Rodbell, oral testimony, 1990, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn504687

SIMONE WEIL LIPMAN (*born 1920, France; 13 years old when Hitler came to power*). I lived in Strasbourg, on the border with Germany. You just had to cross the Rhine River and you were in Germany. So what was happening in Germany from the late 1920s on, from the rise of Hitler—it was part of my growing-up years. I remember April 1, 1933, when we had a solemn service in our synagogue in Strasbourg because of the restrictions on Jews, and Hitler being installed.* We began to have lot of Jewish refugees come into the city. It was not happening overnight. Although I thought it would never happen in France—French people don’t do things like that—my parents probably thought differently, although they took no measures to protect themselves from anything. My father, confident in his status of a loyal French citizen, continued his business to the last day, never put a penny aside, never did anything. But I



***It came gradually.
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grew up with the awareness that, indeed, it can happen to the Jews. And I know the history of the Jews. So '33—this is '39 [when the war begins], six years: it came gradually. And then after that, it was just fighting for your survival, you know, and fighting for the survival of others, for those of us who got involved in that [the Resistance].

___Simone Marguerite (Weil) Lipman, oral testimony, 1998, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn506653

JACK HOFFMANN (*born 1924, Poland; family moved to Austria in 1926; nine years old when Hitler came to power*). In 1933 I was nine years old; we were living in Vienna. When Hitler came to power, at first you sort of took note of it. But shortly into the '30s, from 1933 onward, we had a lot of German Jews coming to Vienna, particularly entertainers who could no longer practice their profession. We had all sorts of collections for them; the Jewish community was quite active in Vienna.

* On April 1, 1933, several months after Hitler became chancellor of Germany, he ordered a boycott of all Jewish businesses. In the following weeks and months, harsh restrictions were imposed on the rights and freedoms of Jews in Germany.

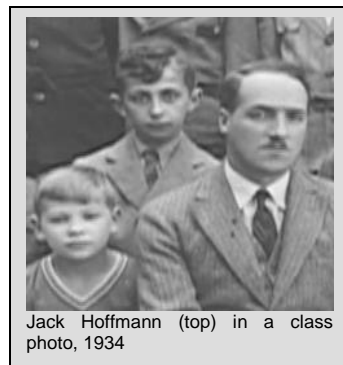
In 1934, the Austrian Nazis assassinated the Austrian chancellor, Engelbert Dollfuss, and this is when we became more aware of what was going on. The Nazis were quite active, more in the country than in Vienna, but there were all sorts of marches and flag-waving and yelling anti-Semitic slogans going on; but where we were, it was not too prevalent.

That summer when Dollfuss was assassinated, we were in lower Austria where we rented a very small cottage from a farmer, and we heard about the assassination. My father called [from Vienna] and told us not to worry about it and that

There were all sorts of marches and flag-waving and yelling anti-Semitic slogans going on . . .

in our neighborhood everything was quiet. We were asked to put lighted candles in our windows [for mourning], and shortly after that we went back into the city, and we were taught a hymn for Dollfuss. This made us more aware of what was going on next door in Germany, and what was happening to a greater extent in Austria itself.

___ Jack Hoffmann, oral testimony, 2006, U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum collections.ushmm.org/search/catalog/irn126354



SUSAN ECKSTEIN CERNYAK-SPATZ (*born 1922, Austria; seven years old when she joined her parents in Berlin, Germany; 11 years old when Hitler came to power*). I found two good friends in the lyceum [school] very shortly after I entered [1932], Herta Dunsig and Dita Raetz-Waldenburg. If I remember correctly, the fathers of both girls were either in the SA or the SS, but it seems no one was bothered by that. Later on, I have often wondered why I was so completely accepted by Herta's as well as Dita's parents. This might have something to do with Dr. Goebbel's* dictum: "Every German knows some very nice and decent Jews. If we take all of them into consideration, we will never solve the Jewish problem."



In the summer of 1933, I encountered the first Nazi youth groups I'd ever seen. We were in Kolberg on the Baltic Sea, a well-known summer resort. I remember walking with our maid and a marching band of either Hitler Youth or Pimpfe—that was the younger group, something on the order of Cub Scouts—came down the street. I remember being envious that I could not belong to and cheer the group.

Many times, when I hear survivors from Berlin talk about how they were persecuted and discriminated against during the early years of the Hitler regime, I wonder whether or not my parents protected me from any knowledge of what was going on, or whether the district we lived in simply was not populated by rabid fanatics.

I wonder whether or not my parents protected me from any knowledge of what was going on, or whether the district we lived in simply was not populated by rabid fanatics.

To this day I cannot understand why my father, such an ardent Zionist,[†] did not immigrate to Palestine when Hitler came to power. I suspect Mother was not particularly attracted to sand and heat and a pioneering lifestyle, and Father, of course, deferred to her wishes.

* Joseph Goebbels was Hitler's Minister of Propaganda in the Third Reich.

[†] A Zionist was a person supporting the creation of a Jewish nation in the Middle East. The nation of Israel was created in 1948.

The whole world was holding its collective breath about the madman's next move.

I suppose we knew about political events, but simply refused to be affected by them. I am sure the parents of our group were making arrangements to leave for overseas; at least I hope they had more sense than my parents.

I will never know what prompted my parents to make this decision at that particular time [to move to Austria in 1936] rather than emigrate from Europe entirely. Hitler had made numerous remarks in his speeches about Austria actually belonging to the greater German Reich, if not immediately, then soon. The whole world was holding its collective breath about the madman's next move.

____ Susan Cernyak-Spatz, *Protective Custody Prisoner 34042*, 2005



- **MORRIS GLASS** survived the Lodz Ghetto and the Auschwitz and Dachau concentration camps. He was 17 when liberated.
- **BARBARA RODBELL** worked with the Dutch Resistance in Amsterdam until liberation. She was 20 when the Allies freed the Netherlands.
- **SIMONE LIPMAN** helped smuggle Jewish children to safe havens in France and Switzerland. She was 24 when the Allies freed France.
- **JACK HOFFMANN** was saved through the Kindertransport program. He was 15 when he arrived in England and 16 when he arrived in the U.S.
- **SUSAN CERNYAK-SPATZ** was deported to Auschwitz without her parents. She was 23 when liberated.

ONLINE RESOURCES

- The Rise of the Nazi Party, 1919-1933 (lesson, Facing History)
www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/teaching-holocaust-and-human-behavior/rise-nazi-party
- "Hitler: New Power in Germany," *The New York Times*, December 24, 1924 (as presented in "1922: Hitler in Bavaria," *NYT*, 2-10-2015) www.nytimes.com/times-insider/2015/02/10/1922-hitler-in-bavaria/
- German Jewish Refugees, 1933-1939 (U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum)
encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/german-jewish-refugees-1933-1939
- Maps: European Jewish Population (USHMM)
 - ◆ ca. 1933 encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/map/european-jewish-population-distribution-ca-1933
 - ◆ ca. 1950 encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/map/european-jewish-population-distribution-ca-1950
 - ◆ To compare maps: Remaining Jewish Population in Europe, 1945
encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/remaining-jewish-population-of-europe-in-1945