

New Day, New Law

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(April 25, 1933--“Law against Overcrowding in Schools and Universities limits the number of Jewish students in public schools.”)

April 28, 1933

Liebes Tagebuch,

Half of the Jewish students in my class have been expelled. I have heard rumors that the Nazi soldiers have ordered such a decree, though I cannot be sure. No one ever tells me anything regarding our country; I’m not sure they know anything themselves. The German boys in my class--they’re all part of Hitler Youth--intimidate me. They wear little daggers on their belts with “Blut und Ehre” engraved on them. “Blood and Honor.” How would blood bring honor for them? And whose blood? I can hardly remember the days I looked forward to going to school. I am almost completely isolated.

August 19, 1938

Liebes Tagebuch,

I am finally thirteen years old. My father constantly reminds me that when a boy reaches this age, he goes from being a child to being a “grown up” in the Jewish tradition, since this is the year I will have my coming-of-age party, my Bar Mitzvah. When I was younger, I could not wait to turn thirteen, feeling so ready to participate fully in my religion. Now, I am not so sure. Something is happening in our world, something sinister tints the air. Somehow I know it smells like singed hair--a repulsive scent--though I have never before smelt it. A rotting of everything we have known until this point, a rotting of Jewish life. I hope it passes quickly.

(November 9, 1938--Kristallnacht)

November 10, 1938

Liebes Tagebuch,

The synagogue is destroyed. The shards of glass littering the ground crunched beneath our feet as we stared in utter disbelief at the destruction before our eyes. Our beloved temple, the very place where I was to hold my Bar Mitzvah, has been disrespected in such a way that makes us sick to our stomachs. Fires still smoldered--burning the torah scrolls, prayer shawls, everything we held sacred--in heaps of rubble scattered across a nearby field. My world is crumbling, reduced to ashes as I watched the fire consume the materials that should have assisted my graduation from boyhood to manhood. The symbols of our heritage, of our culture, of our faith: they have been so cruelly demolished without reason. How could they do this? What did we ever do to them? I can't answer the questions I so desperately want to ask. No one can, not even father. Maybe Hitler can, the Führer. But I will never ask that man.

(November 15, 1938--“Reich Ministry of Education expels all Jewish children from public schools.”)

November 18, 1938

Liebes Tagebuch,

I previously wrote that I was almost completely isolated in my class. I can now erase the “almost” from that statement. The only positive (well, as positive as I can be right now) of being expelled from school, along with the few other remaining Jewish students, is that the Hitler Youth boys will no longer have the chance to verbally abuse me day after day. Why do they do this? What did we ever do to them? I still have not found the answers I seek. And I have a feeling, settled deep within the pit of my stomach, that I will not find these answers until

something even worse happens. Father tells mother not to be afraid, that this storm will pass. But I have seen the cattle cars packed with neighbors and friends and relatives shuttling by. I have seen the desperate looks in their eyes, their unnecessary pain.

Though I am young, I am not oblivious.

But oh, what I would give to be oblivious again.

## Bibliography

Based loosely on an interview with Mr. Karl Lyon, a German refugee who escaped in 1937 before the war. Interviewed by Taylor, Joanna, Leah, Alyssa, Alex, and Bobby with “Telling Their Stories Oral History Archives Project” out of The Urban School of San Francisco on May 14, 2002 and May 1, 2003.

1. "Karl Lyon." Telling Their Stories: [Www.tellingstories.org](http://www.tellingstories.org). The Urban School of San Francisco, 01 May 2003. Web. 22 Jan. 2017.  
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