**Title:** Rosa Rosenstein at a Purim Celebration with Friends, c. 1929–1930

**Location:** Europe – Western

**Short description**

A photograph of Rosa Rosenstein and her friends at a Purim celebration in Berlin taken a few years before Hitler’s rise to power in 1933.

**Detailed description**

​This is a photograph taken in approximately 1929–1930 of Rosa Rosenstein at a Purim celebration with friends in Berlin, Germany. The photograph shows seven young people in their early twenties dressed in evening dress or fancy dress costumes as is customary for Purim parties. Rosa is pictured second from the right. The men are wearing tuxedos, and one man is wearing a top hat and carrying an umbrella and has an iron cross (German military decoration) pinned to his lapel. The women are wearing party clothes, and some are also wearing scarves and hats. Some of the people are smoking cigarettes. In her oral history, Rosenstein reports that she had “a great circle of friends” and that they liked to go to parties together.

Rosa Rosenstein gave an interview to Centropa about her family history. Rosa’s family was originally from Poland, so they never considered themselves German. They were religious and Zionists, and she recalls observing many different Jewish customs. Rosa went to a Jewish school, all of her friends were Jewish, and her family didn’t have much contact with the non-Jewish community. She describes a happy, carefree life. The family was financially comfortable, and Rosa remembers spending her summers with family and friends in an apartment they rented near a lake. In 1929 Rosa married Maximillian (Michi) Weisz, a young man from Hungary, and they subsequently had two daughters. After Hitler came to power in 1933, all the members of Rosa’s family, except for Rosa, moved to pre-state Israel at separate times; Rosa, Michi, and their daughters moved to Hungary. As the situation for Jews worsened, Rosa sent her daughters to live with her sister and brother-in-law in pre-state Israel. Rosa was sent to an internment camp, but after Michi died in a labour camp in Ukraine, she was allowed to move back to Budapest. She married a man she had met in the internment camp, and together they survived the Holocaust in Budapest. They had a son and moved to Vienna, Austria, where Rosa lived until her death in 2005. The rest of her family, including her son, lived in Israel.

**Would You Like to Know More?**

**Purim <previous document>**

**Jews in Nazi Germany (Pre-World War II)** – The Nazi party came to power in Germany in 1933. After World War I, Germany was faced with military defeat, social unrest and an economic crisis. Many Germans blamed the Jews for these disasters. The difficult situation in Germany and the ever- present anti-Semitic sentiments resulted in a rise in the popularity of the Nazi party, and on January 20, 1933 Adolf Hitler became chancellor of Germany. Immediately, the Jewish community experienced organised attacks, and anti-Jewish law were passed. Jews were prohibited from working in certain professions, participating in cultural events, purchasing products during certain hours, and even attending school. Jewish businesses were boycotted and looted, and many Jewish people lost their businesses or jobs. The first concentration camp was opened in Dachau, and many Jews were arrested and sent there and to other camps. In 1935 the Nuremberg laws were passed, which stripped German Jews of their citizenship. Jews lost legal protection and were left with all of the obligations but few of the rights of German citizenship. Persecution varied from city to city and peaked in the Kristallnacht pogrom of November 9–10, 1938, in which thousands of Jews throughout Nazi Germany were attacked or arrested and thousands of Jewish-owned shops or businesses were looted and destroyed. Many Jews chose to flee Germany, and, until October 1941, German policy encouraged Jewish emigration. Jews moved to any country that would take them, including other European countries where many were later killed as the Nazis captured new territories, as well as the United States, England, and Israel.

**Teaching Suggestions**

​**​Jewish** **Studies** teachers can use the photograph of a Purim celebration when teaching about the different ways to celebrate the festival.

**Jewish** **History** or **Holocaust** teachers can use the photograph when discussing the lives of German Jews in the years before Hitler’s rise to power in 1933 and the decimation of the German Jewish community in the Holocaust.

**Social** **Studies** teachers can use the photograph and oral history to introduce their students to the art of interviewing people and the importance of recording their stories.

**Discussion Points**

**Observation**

* Describe the people.
* How old do you think they are?
* What are they doing?
* What clothes are they wearing?  
  Are they all wearing regular evening clothes?
* What atmosphere does the photograph portray?

**Reading Between the Lines**

* The photograph was taken at a Purim party in Germany around 1929, before the rise of the Nazi party.  
  What is the central message of the festival of Purim?
* What is the man in the top hat wearing on his lapel?  
  During which war would he probably have been awarded this?  
  What does it symbolise?
* Read Rosa Rosenstein's [oral history](https://www.centropa.org/biography/rosa-rosenstein-0) or watch her [video](https://www.centropa.org/centropa-cinema/rosa-rosenstein-living-history) on the Centropa website.  
  Where was her family from? Did many of the Jews living in Germany at the time come from there?  
  Was her family connected to Judaism and Zionism? Give some examples.  
  Was her family connected to the non-Jewish German society?  
  What was her life like before the Nazis came to power in 1933?
* How did Rosa's life change during World War II?  
  What happened to her family?  
  Where did she live in the following years?

**Connections**

* Looking back on history now, what may be viewed as ironic about Rosa and her friends celebrating Purim in Germany in the years before the Holocaust?  
  Which modern historical figure is sometimes compared to Haman?  
  Do you think that Holocaust survivors have a different outlook on Purim than those who were born after the Holocaust? Explain your answer.
* How do you celebrate Purim?  
  Does your community celebrate Purim with a party or ball?

**Creative Ideas**

* Choose three additional photographs of Rosa's youth from the [Centropa website](https://www.centropa.org/biography/rosa-rosenstein-0) and use them to tell the story of her early years.
* Interview a family member (grandparent, great-aunt, or great-uncle) about how they celebrated Purim when they were children or young adults. Use the [StoryCorps](https://storycorps.org/participate/great-questions/) "great questions" suggestions to help get the conversation started. Record the interview or write it as an oral history.

**Target audience:** Primary School, Junior High, High School, Informal Education, Higher Education

**NLI Links**

[Rosa Rosenstein at a Purim Celebration with Friends, Centropa](https://www.centropa.org/de/photo/rosa-rosenstein-bei-einer-purimfeier-mit-freunden)

[Rosa Rosenstein – Living with History, Centropa](https://www.centropa.org/centropa-cinema/rosa-rosenstein-living-history)  
[Rosa Rosenstein’s Daughters in Kindergarten During a Purim Celebration in Berlin, Centropa](http://www.centropa.org/de/photo/rosa-rosensteins-tochter-bessy-aharoni-und-lilly-drill-im-kindergarten-wahrend-einer)