JANNUSHKA JAKOUBOVITCH (France)

A year before the war, I was five, I went to kindergarten. It was a sunny day in June. I was extremely happy. It was the last happy days of our life because after that, when we came back to Paris from the Loire, my mother put us back to school. Then we had to wear the Jewish star. My brother didn't have too much trouble at school because he was considered a sheriff, like a chief of police, because he was wearing the star. The boys were not too bad for him. But for me, I was the only Jew of the class, they began to beat me.

In the street, when we would play outside, the children would say "Go home, you have no right to stay outside. Be careful, Jew, you have to go back home." My mother kept us at home and told us not to open the door, don't answer. Then began the nightmare. We began to be afraid. It was like a jail.

THE RISE OF THE NAZIS IN GERMANY

Anti-Semitism had been a part of European culture for hundreds of years.

Jews had experienced persecution and exclusion in many parts of Europe. But in the 1930's, the National Socialist — or Nazi — Party in Germany made anti-Semitism their official policy. The Nazi Party came into being after the social, political and economic unrest following the First World War. And when the Nazi leader Adolf Hitler was elected Chancellor in 1933, the world of the German Jews began to fall apart.

The Nazis set policies that took away the basic rights of people.

The Nuremberg Laws of 1935 stripped German Jews of their citizenship. They could no longer marry non-Jewish Germans, vote, enter politics, or even raise the German flag. Later, laws were passed prohibiting Jews from many professions like law or medicine. The Nazi's took away their jobs, their homes, their wealth, their art and culture, and finally, their lives.

Anti-Semitism was used by every level of government to separate Jews from their neighbours.

The goal was to set Jews apart, to make them 'different', less than human. Chaim Kaplan, a Polish Jew, kept a journal during the Nazi occupation. On October 28, 1939, he wrote, "In the eyes of the conquerors we are outside the category of human beings. This is the Nazi ideology, and its followers, both common soldiers and officers, are turning it into a living reality."