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## Henry Steiner

A life-long sense of alienation

*Henry Steiner was born on 13th February, 1934 in Baden bei Wien. His father Max was a dentist and his mother Lillie a dressmaker. They managed to escape Austria and now lives in Hong Kong.*



Kindergarten, about 1939. A picture of Adolf Hitler in the background. (c) ÖNB

In Vienna, as a Jew, I was expelled from kindergarten and attacked by my former classmates. The sheltered life as only child of a prosperous couple was shattered by the closure of our home in Baden bei Wien [1] and my mother and I were forced to camp out in my paternal grandmother's flat from February 1939 until my mother managed to obtain a visa for our departure, against formidable odds.

My father, after "Kristallnacht" [2] was in hiding. Over half of our family could not leave and were exterminated. This experience robbed my father of his profession, my mother of her security and left me with a life-long sense of alienation. My mother was forced to work to support our immigrant family, I was often ill and not long after arrival in New York my parents divorced leaving me with another loss due to the persecution.

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[1] Town near Vienna.

[2] The "Kristallnacht" or "Reichskristallnacht" is another term for the anti-Jewish pogrom all over the German Reich on November 9th/10th, 1938, deriving from the shattering of numerous windowpanes during that night.