

Hilde Radusch

(November 6, 1903 - August 2, 1994)

This essay was written by Charlotte Nicely, the Pink Triangle Legacies Project's 2026 Public History Intern in Partnership with the Zucker/ Goldberg Center for Holocaust Studies at College of Charleston. It is based on the important research of Dr. Claudia Schoppmann. Thank you for your work in preserving queer history.

Hilde Radusch was a German communist, lesbian activist, anti-Nazi resister, and later feminist archivist whose life spanned some of the most turbulent moments of the twentieth century. Her story offers a powerful lens into Weimar-era politics, Nazi persecution, postwar disillusionment, and the long struggle to preserve lesbian history. Hilde's life mattered not only because she survived dictatorship, but because she consistently turned survival into political action.

Hilde was born on November 6, 1903, near Stettin, now Szczecin in Poland, into an upper-middle class, conservative, non-Jewish family. Her parents sent her to schools meant to prepare her for marriage and domestic life. That conventional future never suited her.

Her father, a postal civil servant, died in the First World War. This loss deeply shaped Hilde's life. From him she inherited her fervor and independence.

Later, reflecting on her gendered sense of self, Hilde remarked, "I never felt like a woman—but don't ask me what else I felt like." At eighteen, she moved to Berlin in search of freedom from the rigid expectations of small-town life. She trained as a childcare worker at the Pestalozzi-Fröbel Institute, joined the Communist Youth Association, and later worked as a telephone operator for the postal service. That job gave her financial stability and helped open the door to a more independent life. It was also during this period that she met her first long-term partner, Maria, and began to build a life shaped by both political commitment and same-sex love.

Hilde rose quickly in the Communist Party of Germany (KPD). She became active in the Red Women's and Girls' Association, trained women for demonstrations, spoke publicly, and wrote for the party's women's press. In 1929, she was



Hilde Radusch, 1945
FFBIZ - the feminist archive e. V., B Rep. 500
Acc. 300

elected to the Berlin city council as a KPD representative. Yet her position within the party was never entirely secure. As an out lesbian and outspoken woman, she often faced resistance from leaders who viewed her with suspicion and sometimes tried to block her advancement.

After the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, the regime immediately targeted Hilde as a known Communist. In April 1933, she was arrested for helping establish illegal communication networks. Even after her release, she remained under Gestapo surveillance. Despite that danger, she continued resistance work through the 1930s, distributing anti-Nazi leaflets and maintaining underground contacts. Her relationship with Maria collapsed during these years, strained by politics, repression, and fear.

In 1939 Hilde met Else “Eddy” Klopsch, who became her lifelong partner. Together they opened a restaurant in 1941 that became a refuge for women recently released from prison or forced into hiding. Hilde and Eddy also continued to serve Jewish customers despite the Nazis’ antisemitic decrees against it.

In August 1944, after being warned of another impending arrest, Hilde fled Berlin to the nearby village of Prieros. Eddy joined her soon afterward. Living in hiding, hungry, and isolated, Hilde kept a diary that recorded the harshness of daily survival and her reflections on politics and the future.

After returning to Berlin in 1945, Hilde helped rebuild the city and supported victims of fascism. Disillusioned with the German Community Party, she was expelled in 1946 and later joined the Social Democratic Party. Following the death of her partner Eddy in 1960, she found purpose in writing and activism. In the 1970s, younger activists recognized her contributions, leading to her co-founding the Berlin lesbian group L74 and FFBIZ, a feminist and lesbian archive. Hilde remained dedicated to preserving history until her death in 1994, leaving a legacy of resistance against oppression and ensuring lesbian lives were remembered.



Hilde Rausch (Left) and Else Klopsch (right), undated
FFBIZ - The Feminist Archive

Sources & Further Reading

Schoppmann, Claudia. *Days of Masquerade: Life Stories of Lesbians during the Third Reich*. Columbia University Press, 1996.

Viebig, Annika. “[Hilde Rausch](#).” Text. *Digitales Deutsches Frauenarchiv*, July 9, 2018.

Meusen, I.(2015). [Unacknowledged Victims: Love between Women in the Narrative of the Holocaust. An Analysis of Memoirs, Novels, Film and Public Memorials](#). (Doctoral dissertation).

Read more about Hilde [online](#) and watch the video on [YouTube](#). For more LGBTQ+ Stories from Nazi Germany, visit pinktrianglelegacies.com/stories.