

Stolpersteine laying – 7 September 2022

Biographical notes of Max and Selma Drucker

Meir Max Drucker was born on 11 February 1881 in Lugetal near Flatow, Pomerania, Westpreussen, Germany (now Stara Wiśniewka, near Zlotow, Poland). The Drucker family has lived in or around Flatow since it became part of Prussia around 1770. Cereals and grains were the main cash crop of the entire region. The father of Max, Leib Drucker, had an established wholesale trading house in grains and cereals. Max went to school in Flatow and then learned to trade in grains from his father. The Drucker house was in the center of Flatow, and behind the street-front house, they had a large silo. In 1908, when Max was 27 years old, his father died. Max continued the father's business, which was now called after him. In December 1909, Max married Selma Sarah (née Goldschmidt). He was then 28 years old, and Selma was 18 years old. Selma was also born and lived in Flatow. In October 1910, they had a son: Harry Leo Drucker. And in 1912, Hans Bodo (later Henry Brian) was born. Three other children died as infants. Their first-born, Harry Leo, was my father.

In August 1914, WW1 broke out. Max, who had previously undergone compulsory military training, volunteered and was immediately sent to the Russian front. Sometime later, he was wounded. Sergeant Drucker recovered in Greiswald, where he was assigned to train new recruits. After six months, he was considered healed and sent back to the Eastern front. Sergeant Max Drucker was a very proud veteran soldier, decorated for his commitment and sacrifice after the war's end by the *Verwundeten Abzeichen* and the *Eisernen Kreuz*.

After WW1, life returned to routine for Max and Selma in Flatow. Except that most of Selma's family migrated to Berlin. Selma's mother, Cäcilia Goldschmidt, and three brothers: Max Goldschmidt, Alfred Goldschmidt, and Georg Jacob Goldschmidt. And importantly, the first-born son, Harry Leo Drucker, start his university studies in dental medicine in Berlin. Harry was the first in his family to go to a university. In 1930, the Drucker family set up an apartment in Schlüterstrasse 26, Charlottenburg, Berlin. Selma spent most of her time in Berlin. There were more relatives in Berlin than anywhere else. Max remained mostly in Flatow with his younger son Hans to take care of the business. And the family gathered in Berlin on most weekends, as there was a railway connection between the two locations.

Shortly after the Nazis came to power in 1933, the local government in Flatow was also taken over by the local Nazis. Grandfather Max, and his younger son Hans Bodo, were arrested in Berlin by the Gestapo for questioning false allegations of financial offenses by the Flatow Gestapo. And their business was confiscated. My father, Harry Leo, was expelled from the university, supposedly "for Marxist activities" before he could finish his studies.

Our grandmother Selma Drucker was the most practical and least ideological interpreter of events. When Max and Hans were arrested, she did not know what would happen to the detained men, but she insisted that Harry leave Germany immediately. Harry left Berlin by rail to the port of Genoa (Italy) and from there by ship (the ss Roma) to Haifa in September 1933. And when Hans was released on 17 April 1934, he left Germany immediately (by land, via Belgium, and many countries until he reached Cuba, then Puerto Rico, and finally the USA in 1940).

But grandparents Max and Selma Drucker could never leave Germany. Initially, they thought they

must stay to save their business and dignity. My grandparents believed in the German state. They believed that nothing would happen to them because my grandfather was wounded during his military service for Germany in WW1. They clung to the hope that Germany could not be their persecutor. They believed the system would exonerate them because they had committed no crimes and had done nothing wrong. They failed to recognize the Nazi policy to annihilate the Jews. They still followed orders, partly because they had no choice but partly because they were law-abiding citizens. During all this time, the Nazi state was following a systematic program to impoverish Jews and delegitimize every aspect of Jewish life. Jews could no longer work in many professions. They could not own businesses, goods, money, other assets, or jewelry. They could not travel or even talk on the telephone. Their newspapers were banned. Any mutual aid or associative activity became illegal. The purpose of Nazi Germany was to dehumanize, humiliate, and deprive people of any right, notably their right to live.

Opa and Oma were destitute, helpless, powerless, and defenseless when they realized they stood no chance of fighting injustice.

Max was arrested several times in Berlin; the last time, he was deported on 2 June 1942 to Sachsenhausen concentration camp. He would never return. On 10 October 1942, he was killed by gassing in Bernburg. He was 61 years old. The records stated that he died from the flu in Sachsenhausen KZ. This lie shows that the Nazis kept their gas experiments a secret then.

Oma Selma lived in Berlin for a few more months, isolated from and without news about her brothers, two sons, and mother (who lived in Berlin Mitte). Selma was deported to Auschwitz Birkenau early in March 1943. On 6 March 1943, aged 51 years, she lost her life in the Auschwitz concentration camp, just a few days before I was born.

The Nazis also killed Selma's mother and brothers. The two sons of Selma and Max Drucker left Berlin and survived. Harry Leo Drucker migrated to Jerusalem, married there, and had a daughter and a son. Hans Bodo Drucker traveled through many countries until he could reach New York. He enlisted in the US Army during WW2, and as he was afraid that he might be sent to Germany (as he knew German), he changed his name to Henry Brian Draker. Henry Brian married in New York and had two sons.

The biography was written by David Mark Dror (born Drucker Weil)

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¹ Cäcilia Goldschmidt born Netztal bei Flatow 1859, deported from Berlin and died in Theresienstadt 1942

² Max Goldschmidt, born 1884 Flatow, died 1924 in Berlin

³ Alfred Goldschmidt, born 1887 Flatow, deported from Berlin and died in 1941 in Riga

⁴ Georg Jacob Goldschmidt, born Flatow, deported from Berlin and died in 1943 in Tarnow.

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