

Munk, Max-Israel (1888–1972)

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Max-Israel Munk was a Seventh-day Adventist of Jewish descent and a survivor of the holocaust.

Early Life

Max-Israel Munk was born in 1888 in a family of devout Jews in Neudorf near Bielitz, Austria. Munk worked as a goldsmith. He was married to Auguste (nee Patzack). In 1908, Munk became a Seventh-day Adventist. After Hitler seized power in 1933, Munk resigned from the local church in Minden, Germany, in order to save the local church from any embarrassment with local authorities.

Because of the persecution of Jews, Munk thought of fleeing to Holland. On July 25, 1938, Albert Pioch, the president of Hestia-Westphalian conference, wrote to a German preacher Friedrich A. Bäcker, living in Holland requesting a job for Munk.² However, Munk could not find a job in as much as foreigners needed a work permit, and this was not easy to get.³ With no possibility of any work, even the auxiliary attempts to assist the Munk family ceased.

Imprisonment and Persecution

Monk was imprisoned at Buchenwald for a short time until the end of 1938. After this, Pooch, under severe pressure from the Nazi authorities, counseled Monk and his family to live in exclusion. The Munk family could not even attend Sabbath services at the local church, and church members were publicly asked by the local pastor to stop all contact with the family. Nevertheless, Munk continued to support the local Adventist church with offerings and tithe returns. He also refused to work on Sabbath as a faithful Adventist. When Munk's daughter Esther wrote to Otto Brozio (1901-1990), the German Adventist welfare leader, wanting to know whether he knew of other hard-pressed Adventists of Jewish descent, she received a cynical answer from him: "I have not counted them yet." Such was the plight of some Jewish Adventists during the period.

Later, Munk was accused of belonging to the group of "mixed marriage" ("Michehepartner") and sent to a forced labor camp in Zeitz. In November 1944, he returned to Bielefeld. In February 1945, he was abducted and

deported to the concentration camp at Theresienstadt. His family did not receive any support from the local Adventist Church. A food wholesaler, who was known in Bielefeld as a convinced national socialist, took pity on the beleaguered and isolated family and helped them with food donations. Only two church members, Otto Gmehling (a pastor) and his in-law Hedwig Voss, found the courage to visit and comfort the family at this time.

Late Life and Contribution

Interestingly, Munk survived the holocaust in a concentration camp as a medical prisoner. After the war, Munk asked for readmission of his family in the Adventist Church. Wherever he appeared, he pleaded for forgiveness and reconciliation. Thus, although this former Adventist church leader was excluded from the church in the Nazi era because of his Jewish connections, he not only remained faithful to Adventism, but also was proactive in trying to make reconciliation. From October 1945 on, he lived in Petershagen (Windheim) in Minden. There, he worked as a sales retailer and a repairman. He died in Zorge (Harz) in 1972, where he was living since 1956.

SOURCES

Heinz, D. "Adventisten und Nationalsozialismus: Trauma einer Generation." *AdventEcho*, May 2005.

Heinz, D. "Missionarisch Offenheit in der Welt, ideologische Anpassung in Deutschland: Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten und Juden in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus." In *Freikirchen und Juden im "Dritten Reich": Instrumentalisierte Heilsgeschichte, antisemitische Vorurteile und Verdrängte Schuld* ed. Daniel Heinz, 281- 310. Gottingen: V&R Unipress, 2011.

Rijn, H. van to Daniel Heinz, July 15, 2008. Private letter. Personal collection of Daniel Heinz, trans. Chigemezi Wogu.

NOTES

1. See Daniel Heinz, "Adventisten und Nationalsozialismus: Trauma einer Generation," *Advent Echo*, May 2005, 32-34.
2. Daniel Heinz, "Missionarisch Offenheit in der Welt, ideologische Anpassung in Deutschland: Siebenten-Tags-Adventisten und Juden in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus," in *Freikirchen und Juden im "Dritten Reich": Instrumentalisierte Heilsgeschichte, antisemitische Vorurteile und Verdrängte Schuld*, ed. Daniel Heinz (Gottingen: V&R unipress, 201), 293.
3. Based on a letter from H. van Rijn to Daniel Heinz, 15 July 2008, personal collection of Daniel Heinz, trans. Chigemezi Wogu.

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