



The Prenski Family lived in a small house at Adlerstraße 7.



The Prenski family lived in one of these small houses, pictured in this undated photograph (Museum for Cultural and Art History of the Hanseatic City of Lübeck)

After World War One Elias Prenski and his wife Sonja, née Lawenda, came with their little daughter Sophie from Grajewo, Poland, to Germany, where they hoped for a better future free of anti-Semitism and pogroms. Elias Prenski was born on the 18th of April 1892, Sonja Lawenda on the 20th of May 1894. Both of them were born in Grajewo. They were married there and their daughter, Sophie was born there on the 28th of January 1918. Two siblings of Mrs. Prenski already lived in Lübeck. The little house at Adlerstrasse 7 belonged to the estate of Eli Lawenda, her brother, who through his horse trading and running a restaurant had created a new life for himself. Here is where the Prensakis found their new home.

Their first son Max was born on the 23rd of June 1924, Martin on the 24th of February 1930 and finally their daughter Margot on the 22nd of March 1931.

To earn a living and support his family Elias Prenski travelled by horse cart selling lubricating oil and grease to the farmers.

The older children went to school with the children from the neighbourhood, Sophie at Marquardplatz, Max at Steinrader Weg near the train station.

Several people, who lived in the neighbourhood and were friends with the children, are still able to describe the family's daily life. Some of them tried to keep in contact with them and support the family even during the Nazi regime. The Wischwill family for instance, when on their way back from their garden plot, used to simply hang a bag full of fruit and vegetables on their fence.

Twice Uschi Wischwill was sent by her father with a sum of money, which he and other Social Democrats had collected for the Prensakis. The Prensakis also received help from the cleaners on the corner across the street. Under the cover of the darkness Mrs. Prenski was able to collect second-hand toys for Margot and Martin at the home of Frau von Rimscha.



Jewish religious school, 1938

Installation at the location



Inscriptions of the installations:

HIER WOHNTE
SONJA PRENSKI
GEB. LAWENDA
JG. 1894
DEPORTIERT 1941
RIGA
ERMORDET 1944 IN
STUTTHOF

HIER WOHNTE
MAX PRENSKI
JG. 1924
DEPORTIERT 1941
RIGA
ERMORDET 1942

HIER WOHNTE
MARTIN PRENSKI
JG. 1930
DEPORTIERT 1941
RIGA
ERMORDET 1942

verlegt am
2. August 2007

HIER WOHNTE
MARGOT PRENSKI
JG. 1931
DEPORTIERT 1941
RIGA
ERMORDET 1942

As Polish citizens the family was to be expelled from Germany in October 1938 and deported

back to Poland in the course of the so-called Polenaktion (Polish Action). They sat on the train together with other families from Lübeck. The train however was stopped upon arriving in Berlin and was then sent back to Lübeck. In the months that followed the Gestapo kept them in their sights. They were summoned several times and urged to clear out. Sophie left home. She lived in several locations where Hakhshara was being practiced, which was to prepare her for possibly emigrating to Palestine. Max began a metalworker-training course in Hamburg.

On the 25th of July 1939 Elias Prenski died of blood poisoning and was buried in the Jewish cemetery in Moisling. At that time Mrs. Prenski's siblings and their families had already left the country for Sweden and Shanghai.

In 1940 the Jewish elementary school on St.-Annen-Straße, which Martin and Margot had attended since their first days at school, was closed. Now they had to attend the Jewish elementary school on Karolinenstraße in Hamburg. They found accommodations at the Jewish orphanage, as the daily train ride would have been too expensive. In the autograph book of a former school-friend an entry by Margot Prenski can be found.



Entry by Margot Prenski of 12th June 1941 in the autograph book of Marion Gumprecht, today Portman. Marion Gumprecht's family was able to leave for the USA even in the summer of 1941.

Mrs. Prenski had to leave Adlerstraße and found accommodation at the "Asyl" of the Jewish community on St.-Annen-Straße.

Translator's note: The building next to the synagogue was called "das Asyl".

It was owned by the Jewish community and used as a home for the elderly and homeless. This was also the assembly place for the "evacuation to the East" in early December 1941. Margot, Martin and Max returned to Lübeck and were deported to Riga together with their mother and many other Jewish people from Lübeck, as well as people from Hamburg, Kiel and other places in Schleswig-Holstein. Those on the so-called Hamburger Transport of the 6th of December 1941 were taken from the Skirotova train station near Riga to a former estate called Jungfernhof. In those winter months many people died from the cold and starvation. In February 1942 about a thousand children, women and sick people were transported in lorries to the Bikernieki forest where they were shot. Another similar killing action took place on the 26th of March 1942. This was the latest possible date that Margot, Martin and Max were still alive.

Sonja Prenski's name can be found in the December 1944 death registry of the Stutthof Concentration Camp.

Her eldest daughter, Sophie, managed to escape from Germany in 1940 with the last illegal transport via the Danube River and the Black Sea to the Mediterranean Sea to the Palestine coast. She was shipwrecked when an explosion on board sank the ship. Wearing only pyjamas she swam ashore, thus saving her life.

References in Addition to Standard Reference Materials:

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- Archiv der Hansestadt Lübeck, Staatliche Polizeiverwaltung 25, 109, 110, 121,
- Schul- und Kultusverwaltung 375,
- Amt für Schulwesen 879
- Buch der Erinnerung, Die ins Baltikum deportierten deutschen, österreichischen und tschechoslowakischen Juden, bearbeitet von Wolfgang Scheffler und Diana Schulle,

München 2003

- Datenpool JSHD der Forschungsstelle "Juden in Schleswig-Holstein" an der Universität Flensburg
- Landesarchiv Schleswig, Abt. 352 Kiel, 8959, 8960 und Abt. 761, 16842, 16722
- Landgericht Hamburg vom 29.12.1951, (50) 14/50. Lfd. Nr. 307: NS-Gewaltverbrechen in Lagern / Riga Lettland
- Memorbuch zum Gedenken an die jüdischen, in der Schoa umgekommenen Schleswig-Holsteiner und Schleswig-Holsteinerinnen, hrsg. V. Miriam Gillis-Carlebach, Hamburg 1996
- Albrecht Schreiber, Zwischen Davidstern und Doppeladler, Illustrierte Chronik der Juden in Moisling und Lübeck, Lübeck 1992
- Staatsarchiv Hamburg 362-6/10 Talmud Tora
- Yad Vashem, The Central Database of Shoah Victims Names
- Zeitzeugengespräche in Lübeck, Israel, England, USA und Briefwechsel seit 1993

You can find detailed information about the Prenski family in a booklet, published by Geschwister-Prenski-Schule, Integrierte Gesamtschule Lübeck, which in 1994 was renamed Geschwister-Prenski-Schule (the Prenski Siblings School) in memory of Margot, Martin und Max Prenski: Heidemarie Kugler-Weimann / Sabine Seidensticker / Brigitte Söllner-Krüger: Spuren der Geschwister Prenski, Eine Schule lebt mit ihrem Namen, Geschwister-Prenski-Schule, Integrierte Gesamtschule Lübeck, 2006. The booklet is available from the school at this address: Travemünder Allee 5a, 23568 Lübeck.

Heidemarie Kugler-Weimann, 2008

Translation: Martin Harnisch and Glenn Sellick, 2010

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