



Dr. Elias and Dr. Rahel Straus, née Goitein, Munich

Justizrat (senior counsel) Dr. Elias Straus (July 4, 1878 in Karlsruhe - June 16, 1933 in Munich) was an outstanding lawyer, who had his office first at Residenzstrasse 27, later on at Dienerstrasse 14. His partner Dr. Sigbert Feuchtwanger called him "the German attorney". Over the years he held various leading positions within the Jewish community of Munich and the Zionist local chapter. He and his wife Dr. Rahel Straus were active Zionists and for a long time the only prominent representatives of Zionist ideas within Munich's Jewry.

The Straus family

As the offspring of a rabbinical dynasty, Elias Straus was born into a well-respected Karlsruhe family. His father was the banker Samuel Straus, a leader of Jewish conservatives in Germany and philanthropist, who donated substantial parts of his assets for charitable purposes. Elias' mother was a daughter of the well-known Munich banker J. L. Feuchtwanger. In his parental home the bases for Dr. Straus global knowledge were laid.

Dr. Elias Straus' role in Munich's Jewish community

In 1919 Dr. Straus was elected for the first time to the community council. Since 1921 he was deputy chairman of the executive committee of Munich's Jewish community. Moreover, he engaged in numerous specialized committees, e.g. as the chairman of the committee for finances and foundations and the social committee.

In 1921 the community established its own welfare and youth office, which was directed by Dr. Elias Straus. Here he combined all institutions in the field of Jewish social work, many of them active ever since the foundation of the congregation, and developed a new style of Jewish youth welfare service. At the funeral service for Dr. Straus in 1933, Rabbi Leo Baerwald called him a "creative and ingenious social politician" because of his achievements in cultural and social work.

As another function, Straus served the regional organization of Bavarian Jewish communities as a secretary up to its death. Since the beginning he belonged to the leading personnel of the regional organization.



Dr. Elias Straus

(photo: BIG no. 13, July 01, 1933)

The Zionist

For many years Dr. Straus was the president of the Zionist organization's local chapter in Munich. In 1921 he was elected to be the Zionists' representative in the community council. Briefly beforehand the Jewish People's Party had been founded. Straus, who at the same time was a member of the conservative congregation, led the Zionists into a coalition with the conservatives and the Eastern Jews within the People's Party. The aims of the party were the observance of Jewish traditions, equal rights for the Jews from Eastern Europe and the establishment of Jewish educational facilities. In addition Straus founded and organized the non-profit loan bank "Iwria Darlehnskasse" functioning as its chairman up to its death.

Early death

Dr. Elias Straus deceased on June 16, 1933 at the age of only 54 years. He was buried at New Jewish Cemetery in an honorary grave donated by the community. In the last months of his life he, after thirty years of law practice, had to experience the humiliation of no longer being allowed to enter the law courts for being a "non-Aryan" lawyer. Until the end his wife, early recognizing Nazism's rise and its consequences, pushed him to emigrate to Palestine.

NACHRUF

Es verstarb der Vorsitzende unseres Aufsichtsrates

Herr Justizrat Dr. E. Straus

Der Entschlafene gehörte seit 1923 dem Aufsichtsrat unserer Gesellschaft an, und führte dessen Vorsitz seit Anfang 1931 bis zu seinem Ableben. Während dieses Jahrzehntes stellte der Verstorbene sein außergewöhnliches Wissen und seine unermüdete Schaffenskraft in völlig selbstloser Weise jederzeit zur Verfügung unseres Unternehmens, dessen Entwicklung er im Laufe dieser Jahre entscheidend förderte. Aufsichtsrat und Gesellschaft fühlen sich von dem unerwarteten Ableben ihres Vorsitzenden um so schmerzlicher und tiefer betroffen, als sie in ihm nicht nur einen weitblickenden und sicheren Berater, sondern auch einen durch außerordentliche Lebenswürdigkeit ausgezeichneten Freund und Förderer verlieren. Sein Andenken ist uns allen unvergesslich und wird in der Geschichte unseres Werkes in Dankbarkeit und Verehrung fortleben.

Aufsichtsrat und Vorstand

der Bayerischen Aktien-Gesellschaft für chemische und landwirtschaftlich-
chemische Fabrikate Heufeld

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One of the obituaries for Dr. Straus in "Muenchner Neueste Nachrichten"

Dr. Rahel Straus, née Goitein: School and studies

Rahel (March 21, 1880 in Karlsruhe - May 15, 1963 in Jerusalem) was the daughter of rabbi Gabor Goitein and the elementary school teacher Ida Loewenfeld. After she had finished Girls' High School in 1893, Rahel attended the first German Girls' College in Karlsruhe and graduated in 1899. Against the resistance of some professors at Heidelberg university, she became the first regular female student of medicine there. Six years later, on January 30, 1905, she absolved the state examination, which allowed her to practice as a doctor anywhere in Germany.



The residence of the Straus family: Kobellstrasse 13
(photo: Susanne Rieger)

Marriage and children

In February 1905 Rahel Goitein married the lawyer Dr. Elias Straus whom she knew since her childhood, and moved with him to Munich. All of her five children Isa (1909), Hannah (1912), Frederic (1914), Gabriele (1915) and Ernst (1922) were born in Munich.

Doctor in Munich

After moving to Munich Rahel Straus did her doctorate and opened her own practice in 1908. As a female physician she fought for the abolishment of § 218, however she herself referred from carrying out abortions due to the position of her husband within the Jewish community. Soon brochures and scientific treatise with educational and social-hygienic contents followed. As an renown expert Dr. Straus was invited frequently to lectures, for instance in 1927 by the Jewish community in Nuremberg about the topic of "ways and aberrations of modern education". The Nuremberg community's newsletter asserted to her explanations: "Enthusiastic applause rewarded this splendid lecture."

Social and political commitment

Due to her experiences as a doctor and a working mother she began to participate actively in the Zionist and the women's movement and engaged herself in various organizations. She worked for the federation of Jewish women for the promotion of Palestine, of which she later was the chairwoman up to emigration. In 1925 she became member of the executive board of the Jewish women federation, since 1932 as the deputy chairperson. As a member of Munich's local group of the Jewish

women federation, Dr. Straus founded in 1926 the social women's school in Wolfratshausen. Likewise she was a member of "Women's International Zionist Organization" (WIZO).

Starting anew in Israel

In November 1933, after the death of their husband, Dr. Rahel Straus emigrated to Palestine with her four teenage children, her oldest daughter, married since 1932, and her son-in-law Dr. Ignaz Emrich. There she practiced another seven years as a doctor and subsequently engaged in social work for many decades being honored for her commitment several times. For instance the Israeli society for the reintegration of the mentally handicapped" named its training center after Dr. Rahel Straus. On May 15, 1963 Dr. Rahel Straus deceased in Jerusalem.

Susanne Rieger

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