LIEBSCHÜTZ AND ROZSA FAMILY PAPERS, 1930-2006, and undated
2015.574.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
Washington, DC 20024-2126
Tel. (202) 479-9717
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Descriptive summary

Title: Liebschütz and Rozsa family papers
Dates: 1930-2006, and undated
Accession number: 2015.574.1
Creator: Liebschütz, Selma; Rozsa, Lisa; and Rozsa, Imre.
Extent: 4 document boxes, 3 flat boxes (2.75 linear feet)
Repository: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW, Washington, DC 20024-2126

Abstract: The Liebschütz and Rozsa families papers consists of correspondence, documents, photographs, diaries, and other writings, related to the families of Elise (Lisa) Rozsa, originally of Brno, Czechoslovakia, and her husband, Imre Rozsa, originally of Hungary, both of whom fled Europe during the Holocaust, living in exile in Iraq, Palestine, Uganda, and Kenya. The collection also includes the memoir of Lisa Rozsa’s mother, Selma Liebschütz, describing her family’s experiences during the Holocaust, including imprisonment at Theresienstadt and Auschwitz, and also includes material about Imre Rozsa’s post-war career as an architect in Kenya.

Languages: English, German, Czech, Hungarian, Arabic.

Administrative Information

Access: Collection is open for use, but is stored offsite. Please contact the Reference Desk more than seven days prior to visit in order to request access.

Reproduction and use: Collection is available for use. Material may be protected by copyright. Please contact reference staff for further information.

Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Liebschütz and Rozsa family papers (accession number), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

https://collections.ushmm.org
Acquisition information: Gift of Mara Senn, 2015.

Related materials: An oral history interview of Lisa Rozsa, conducted on 16 October 1993, has been separated from this collection and is cataloged separately as an oral history. In addition, two books donated with the collection, both about the Jewish community of Nairobi, have been transferred to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Library.

Accruals: Accruals may have been received since this collection was first processed, see archives catalog at collections.ushmm.org for further information.

Processing history: Processed by Brad Bauer, February 2016.

Biographical note

Lisa Rozsa (1917-2012) was born Elise Liebschütz on 27 August 1917 in Brno (present-day Czech Republic), the daughter of Jacques (1888-1942) and Selma (née Bogad) Liebschütz (1895-1980), who also had one other daughter, Gerda (1919-1944). She completed her secondary education in Brno by 1937, and around this time, met Imre Rozsa, a young architecture and engineering student who was pursuing his degree at the German technical university in Brno. Imre (1911-1991), was born Emerich Rosenbaum on 23 July 1911 in Nagyvárad, Hungary (present day Oradea, Romania), the son of Jenő and Gisela (nee Kohn) Rozsa. Following the completion of his studies in Brno, he and Lisa decided to marry, but he returned to Hungary to begin his career, while she continued her studies in Brno. Unable to work in Hungary, he took a position as a civil engineer in Iraq, leaving for that country in 1937. In 1939, with the outbreak of war imminent, and unable to complete her studies in Czechoslovakia, Lisa left to join Imre in Iraq, where they were married in a Christian ceremony, since they were unable to find a rabbi who could marry them in the Jewish tradition.

Although Imre and Lisa were able to work for the next few years in Iraq, with Imre also contributing to the war effort through the Ministry of Defence in that country, and Lisa working for the Indian Red Cross in Basra, events in the war in North Africa, including the Battle of El Alamein, led the British colonial authorities in Iraq and elsewhere in the Middle East to declare residents with passports from Axis-held countries to be enemy aliens. Since Lisa and Imre held passports from the German-occupied Czechoslovakia and from Hungary, they were interned by the British, and sent initially to Palestine, and then to an internment camp in Entebbe, Uganda. By 1944, having been able to establish that rather than being enemy aliens, they had fled Europe due to persecution by the Germans and their allies, the British authorities released them from the internment camp on parole, and permitted Imre to join the British military forces in East Africa as an engineer. Imre was posted in Kenya, where Lisa was permitted to join him, and after the war they chose to become British citizens and to make Kenya their home.

In the meantime, Lisa’s remaining family in Brno had been subjected to the anti-Semitic measures that were implemented following the German occupation of Bohemia and Moravia in 1939, including the seizure by the authorities of the family business, a freight and shipping company, which was then taken over by one of the non-Jewish Czech employees. In November 1941, Lisa’s parents and her sister Gerda were deported to Theresienstadt, and within a few months, in April 1942, Jacques Liebschütz died of pneumonia. In late 1943, Gerda was sent on a transport to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she died in April 1944, and in May 1944, Selma was also deported to Auschwitz-Birkenau, where she remained as a forced laborer for several months. At the end of that time, during a “selection” of camp inmates, Selma
was originally directed by a camp doctor to join a group that subsequently were killed in a gas chamber. Another prisoner she had befriended, who wanted Selma to remain with her, implored her to follow her when the guards were not looking, and in doing so, saved her life. Instead of being gassed, Selma was sent with a group of women on a transport to Christianstadt, a sub-camp of Gross-Rosen, where she remained a forced laborer until that camp was evacuated in February 1945. During evacuation, the prisoners were sent on a death march through Lower Silesia and Saxony, and during this time, Selma and friend managed to escape and hide in a nearby village for some time, but were eventually turned in. Selma spent the remainder of the war in prisons at Karlsbad (Karlovy Vary) and was returned to Theresienstadt, where she was liberated in May 1945.

Following the war, Selma returned to Brno, and the apartment she had previously lived in. Distant relatives and friends cared for her, and helped her get a job in a factory, but as soon as she re-established contact with her daughter and son-in-law, who she had learned were in Nairobi, she made plans to join them there. With the help of her brother-in-law, Leopold (“Poldi”) Liebschütz, who lived in London, she left Czechoslovakia in October 1946, first for London, and after being there several months, for Africa. Arriving in Nairobi, she lived with Imre and Lisa, and their young family, which included daughter Eve (born 1944), son John (born 1949), and daughter Julia (born 1952). Imre soon established a successful architectural practice in Nairobi, and among other commissions, built the new Jewish synagogue, as well as numerous office buildings, homes, and apartment towers.

In 1978, after their daughter, Eve, and her family (husband, Richard Senn, and daughters Mara and Tana), had moved to the United States and settled in California, Imre and Lisa decided to join them there, and moved first to Santa Monica, where Selma also joined them, before retiring to Ojai.

Scope and content of collection
The Liebschütz and Rozsa families papers consists of correspondence, documents, photographs, diaries, and other writings, related to the families of Elise (Lisa) Rozsa, originally of Brno, Czechoslovakia, and her husband, Imre Rozsa, originally of Hungary, both of whom fled Europe during the Holocaust, living in exile in Iraq, Palestine, Uganda, and Kenya. The collection includes written accounts from Lisa Rozsa and her mother, Selma Liebschütz, detailing their experiences during the war years, including Liebschütz's account of being deported to Auschwitz, her experiences in several subsequent camps as a forced laborer, escape from a death march, recapture and imprisonment at Theresienstadt, and liberation. Documents include identification, education, immigration, and restitution documents related chiefly to Lisa and Imre Rozsa, but also to other members of their family, including documentation of their exile in Iraq and internment as enemy aliens by the British in Africa during the war, as well as post-war life in Kenya. Correspondence is chiefly between members of the extended Liebschütz family, including Selma Liebschütz's correspondence to her daughter and son-in-law during the pre-war and war years, and with other family members in the immediate post-war era. Photographs consist primarily of pre-war images of the Liebschütz and Rozsa families in Czechoslovakia and Hungary prior to the war, of Lisa and Imre Rozsa in Iraq during the war and in Kenya in the post-war years. Also includes a diary written by Lisa Rozsa between 1929 and 1942, as well as scrapbooks documenting Imre Rozsa's career as an architect in Iraq and Kenya, including material related to the design and construction of the main synagogue in Nairobi.

The series of papers about Selma Liebschütz contains her typescript, untitled memoir, written for her family around 1970, extensive correspondence sent to her daughter, son-in-law, and brother-in-law during the immediate post-war period (1945-1948), and documents related to the restitution claims she filed against the West German government in 1956, for the deaths of her husband and daughter.
(Jacques and Gerda Liebschütz), as well as physical mistreatment she had endured as a forced laborer in several concentration camps.

The Lisa (Liebschütz) Rozsa series contains primarily biographical documents that illustrate the chronology of her life and experiences. These include documents related to her emigration from Czechoslovakia in 1939, including a Christian baptism certificate and letters of reference; materials from her wartime years in Iraq and Uganda, including identification documents, documents pertaining to her internment at a camp for enemy aliens in Entebbe, Uganda; documents that record her education and professional training in Czechoslovakia and in postwar Africa; documents attesting to her status as a citizen of Czechoslovakia and the United Kingdom, as well as her residency in Czechoslovakia and Kenya; passports, work permits, membership cards, and drivers licenses, dating from the post-war years; her marriage certificate—both from the ceremony that was conducted by Christian clergy in Iraq, and the Jewish ceremony performed in Kenya; and material that documents her activities in retirement in California, including volunteer positions and speaking engagements. In addition to such biographical documents, this series also contains the diary that she maintained from her youth in Brno, beginning in 1929, until her move to Iraq and life in Basra and Baghdad, in 1942. Later in life, Lisa reflected on her experiences in a number of short, autobiographical vignettes that she wrote, recounting the history of her family, her wartime experiences, and her post-war life with Imre and her children in Kenya, and these are gathered together in the folders titled “Writings.”

The Imre Rozsa series is divided into two subseries, Biographical and Professional. The former series contains many of the same types of documents as the corresponding files in the Lisa Rozsa series, including records pertaining to birth, marriage, education, citizenship, residency status, and immigration of Imre Rozsa. In addition, this subseries contains documents pertaining to Rozsa’s military service as an engineer, first in Iraq, and then in Kenya, as well as his internment as an enemy alien by the British authorities, and the time spent in an internment camp in Uganda. Although the Professional subseries contains letters of reference from pre-war Czechoslovakia, it primarily focuses on Rozsa’s career as an architect in post-war Kenya, including albums and booklets that contain architectural plans for several of his commissions in Kenya, and photographs of his completed projects there.

In addition to the boxes of documents, the collection also contains three boxes of photo albums, one of which focuses on photographs of the Liebschütz, Rozsa, and Bogad families in Moravia and Hungary prior to World War I. The second album, while containing some family photographs from the inter-war years, focuses primarily on the experiences of Imre and Lisa Rozsa in Iraq from 1937 to 1942, and on events during Imre’s military service in East Africa in 1944. Subsequent albums document the post-war lives of members of the Rozsa family in Kenya, during the 1950s and 1960s.

**System of arrangement**
The Liebschütz and Rozsa family papers are divided in the following series: I. Liebschütz, Selma, II. Rozsa, Lisa (Liebschütz), III. Rozsa, Imre, and IV. Albums. The first three series are divided by subseries, and within these, alphabetically by folder title.

**Indexing terms**

**Personal names**
Rozsa, Imre (1911-1991)
Rozsa, Lisa (1917-2012)
Liebschütz, Selma (1895-1980)

**Topical headings**
- Jews--Czech Republic--Brno.
- Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Czechoslovakia--Personal narratives.
- Theresienstadt (Concentration camp)
- Auschwitz (Concentration camp)
- Christianstadt (Concentration camp)
- Jewish refugees--Iraq.
- Jewish refugees--Kenya--Nairobi.
- Kenya--Emigration and immigration.

**Geographical headings**
- Architects--Kenya.
- Brno (Czech Republic)
- Baṣrah (Iraq)
- Nairobi (Kenya)

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**CONTAINER LIST**

**Box Folder**

I. Selma Liebschütz, 1945-1980

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<td>6</td>
<td>1945</td>
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<tr>
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<td>7</td>
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<td>Liebschütz, Leopold, letters to, 1945-1946</td>
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<td>Adjustments, 1975-1980</td>
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https://collections.ushmm.org
1 18  Correspondence, 1964-1971
1 19  Documents: Gerda, 1956
1 20  Documents: Jacques, 1946, 1956
1 21  Documents: Selma, 1946, 1965
1 22  Financial, Czechoslovakia, 1946-1949
1 23  Medical documents, 1956-1965

II. Lisa Liebschütz Rozsa

Biographical, 1930-2006
2 1  Baptism, certificate of, 1939
2 2  Belongings, lists of, 1939, 1978
2 3  Birth certificate, copies produced, 1930-1984
2 4  Citizenship and residency, Czechoslovakia, 1928-1939
2 5  Citizenship and residency, United Kingdom (and colonies), 1944-1984
2 6  Correspondence, 1942-1964
2 7  Diary, 1929-1942
2 8  Driver’s licenses, Kenya, 1970-1978
2 9  Education and training, 1936-1965
2 10  Emigration from Czechoslovakia, documents of reference, 1939
2 11  Employment, 1941-1952
2 12  Identification cards, Iraq and Kenya, 1937-1948
2 13  Immigration, to United States, 1978
2 14  Internment, Uganda, 1944
2 15  Marriage certificates, 1938-1947
2 16  Membership cards, and miscellaneous, Kenya, 1965-1979
2 17  News clipping, 1983
2 18  Passports, United Kingdom, 1964-1995
2 19  Passports, United States, 1987-2006
2 20  Restitution, 1998
2 21  Speaking engagements, California, 1980 and undated
2 22  Volunteer service, California, 1979-1984, and undated

Writings
2 25  2007
2 26  Undated

III. Imre Rozsa

Biographical, 1935-1986
3 1  Birth certificates, copies and translations, 1946, 1966
3 2  Citizenship and residency, Hungary, 1938
3 3  Citizenship and residency, United Kingdom and Kenya, 1948-1964
3 4  Class reunions, Szeged, Hungary, 1959-1969
3 5  Education, 1935-1946
3 6  Identification cards, Iraq and Kenya, 1937-1960
3 7  Immigration, United States, 1978-1981
3 8  Internment, Palestine and Uganda, 1943-1946
3 9  Marriage certificates and announcements, 1939, 1947
Memberships, 1947-1979

Military service

- Iraq, Ministry of Defense, 1938-1941
- United Kingdom, Royal Engineers, East African Forces, 1946-1952
- Naturalization, United States, 1986
- Passports, United Kingdom and United States, 1967-1990
- Restitution, 1963-1972
- Volunteer service, Ventura County, California, 1984-1986
- Writings, 1987-1989

Professional, 1935-1984

- Applications and appointments, Kenya, 1948-1964
- Letter of retirement, and Lillian Towers project, undated, circa 1978
- Letters of reference, Czechoslovakia and Iraq, 1935-1938
- Newspaper cuttings (scrapbook), 1944-1984

Plan album, 1951-1974, and undated


Birth certificate, copy, 1954

Kenya High School: extracurricular activities, 1961-1962

Kenya High School: general, 1957-1963

Kenya High School: grades, 1957-1962

Musical training, 1954-1958

Westlands School: general, 1949-1956

Westlands School: grades, 1951-1956

Engagement and wedding, 1964

Fashion show, 1957

Nairobi Jewish Community, 1952-1962

Passports, 1970-1975

Brown album: Photographs of the families of Jacques Liebschütz and Selma Bogad Liebschütz, Circa, 1890-1930. Includes family portraits of Jacques with his mother, Mina, and his siblings; of Jacques’ father, Herman; of Selma’s parents, Sigmund and Fanny Bogad, and Selma’s siblings, and of Imre’s parents, Jenô and Gizella (Kohn) Rozsa (earlier Eugen Rosenbaum).

Green album: Photographs primarily of Imre and Lisa Rozsa, circa 1937-1944, primarily during Their period in Iraq, but also some photographs dating from Imre’s wartime service in Kenya, 1944. Also includes photographs of family members, including Leopold Liebschütz, during the 1930s.

Photo album (green): Rozsa family photo album, Kenya, circa 1950s.
Photo album (red): album of news clippings and photos, Rozsa family, Kenya, circa 1960s.