

**LIEBSCHÜTZ AND ROZSA FAMILIES PAPERS, approximately 1890-2009 and
undated (bulk 1930-1960)**

2015.574.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
Washington, DC 20024-2126
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Descriptive summary

Title: Liebschütz and Rozsa families papers

Dates: approximately 1890-2009 and undated (bulk 1930-1960)

Accession number: 2015.574.1

Creator: Liebschütz (Family: Nagyvárad, Hungary)

Additional creator: Rozsa (Family: Brno, Czechoslovakia)

Extent: 5 linear feet (4 boxes, 5 oversize boxes, and 4 oversize folders)

Repository: United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, 100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW,
Washington, DC 20024-2126

Abstract: The Liebschütz and Rozsa families papers consist of correspondence, biographical material, professional material, photographs, and diaries as well as restitution, education, and immigration material relating 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 and lived 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 as well as material about Imre Rozsa's post-war career as an architect in Kenya.

Languages: English, German, Czech, Hungarian

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 families papers (2015.574.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Mara Senn donated the Liebschütz and Rozsa families papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2015.

Separated material: Lisa Rozsa conducted an oral history with the Museum (2015.574.2).

Related material: Lisa Rozsa's experiences are mentioned in the book *Escape or Die: The true stories of young people who survived the Holocaust*, by Ina R. Friedman.

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

Processing history: Brad Bauer, February 2016. Edited by Morgan Voth, January 2019.

Biographical note

Lisa Liebschütz (b. Elise, 1917- 2012) was born in Brno (currently Czech Republic) to Jacques (1888-1942) and Selma (née Bogad, 1895-1980) Liebschütz and had a sister 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 (b. Emerich Rosenbaum, 1911-1991), was born in Nagyvárad, Hungary (currently Oradea, Romania) to 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 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.

Imre and Lisa were able to work for the next few years in Iraq with Imre contributing to the war effort through the Ministry of Defence in that country and Lisa working for the Indian Red Cross in Basra, but the 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 and Lisa was permitted to join him. 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 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 the camp was evacuated in February 1945. During evacuation, the prisoners were sent on a death march through Lower Silesia and Saxony when Selma and a 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 imprisoned at Karlsbad (Karlový 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 reestablished contact with her daughter and son-in-law, who she had learned were in Nairobi, she made plans to join them. 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 (b. 1944), son John (b. 1949), and daughter Julia (b. 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.

(Biography written by Brad Bauer and Morgan Voth)

Scope and content of collection

The Liebschütz and Rozsa families papers consist of correspondence, biographical material, professional material, photographs, and diaries as well as restitution, education, and immigration material relating 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 and lived 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 as well as material about Imre Rozsa's post-war career as an architect in Kenya.

The Selma Liebschütz papers contains biographical material such as passports and travel documents, family history, a death certificate and immigration documents, 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 for (Jacques and Gerda Liebschütz) as well as physical mistreatment she had endured as a forced laborer in several concentration camps. The series also includes a memoir and transcript detailing her experiences being deported to Auschwitz, her experiences in several subsequent camps as a forced laborer, escaping from a death march, her recapture and imprisonment at Theresienstadt, and liberation.

The Lisa Liebschütz papers 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. This series also includes 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 papers include records pertaining to birth, marriage, education, citizenship, residency status, and immigration of Imre Rozsa. This series 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. Professional material and albums includes letters of reference from pre-war Czechoslovakia and 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.

The Eve Rozsa Senn papers include a copy of a birth certificate, engagement and wedding announcements, passports, school records, and post-war documents relating to Eva’s experience in Kenya.

Photographs and albums include photographs and newspaper clippings of the Liebschütz and Rozsa. One album includes the experiences 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 families papers are arranged as five series.

Series 1: Selma Liebschütz papers, approximately 1945-2009

Series 2: Lisa Liebschütz Rozsa papers, 1928-2007 and undated

Series 3: Imre Rozsa papers, approximately 1935-1990 and undated

Series 4: Eve Rozsa Senn papers, 1949-1975

Series 5: Photographs and albums, approximately 1890-1960s

Indexing terms

Rozsa, Imre, 1911-1991.

Rozsa, Eva, 1944-

Liebschütz, Lisa, 1917- 2012.

Liebschütz, Selma, 1895-1980.

Theresienstadt (Concentration camp)

Auschwitz (Concentration camp)

Architects--Kenya.
Jews--Czech Republic--Brno.
Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Czechoslovakia--Personal narratives.
Jewish refugees--Iraq.
Jewish refugees--Kenya--Nairobi.
Kenya--Emigration and immigration.

Brno (Czech Republic)
Başrah (Iraq)
Nairobi (Kenya)

Correspondence.
Diaries.
Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Selma Liebschütz papers, approximately 1945-2009

| Folder | Title |
|-----------|--|
| 1.1-1.2 | Biographical material, 1945-2009 (2 folders) |
| 1.3-1.7 | Correspondence: Selma to Lisa and Imre Rozsa approximately 1945-1948 (5 folders) |
| 1.8-1.9 | Correspondence: Leopold Liebschütz, 1945-1947 (2 folders) |
| 1.10 | Correspondence: Miscellaneous, 1946 |
| 1.11 | Memoir and transcript, approximately 1970 |
| 1.12-1.14 | Restitution, 1945-1980 (3 folders) |

Series 2: Lisa Liebschütz papers, 1928-2007 and undated

| Folder | Title |
|-----------------|---|
| 2.1-2.2 OS 1 | Biographical material, 1928-1984 (2 folders) |
| 2.3 | Correspondence, 1942-1964 |
| 5 | Diary, 1929-1942 |
| 2.4 | Education 1936-1965 |
| 2.5 | Emigration and immigration, 1939-1978 |
| 2.6 | Employment, 1941-1970 |
| 2.7-2.8 | Identification documents, 1937-1996 (2 folders) |
| 2.9 | Internment, Uganda, 1944 |
| 2.10 | Restitution, 1998 |
| 2.11 | Speaking engagements, 1980 and undated |
| 2.12 | Volunteer services, 1979-1984 and undated |
| 2.13-2.15 | Writings, 1989-2007 and undated (3 folders) |

Series 3: Imre Rozsa papers, approximately 1935-1990 and undated

| Folder | Title |
|-----------------|--|
| 2.16 OS 2 | Biographical material, 1939-1978 |
| 2.17 | Citizenship, 1938-1986 |
| 2.18 | <i>Design Projects</i> , undated |
| 3.1-3.2 | Education, 1935-1984 (2 folders) |
| 3.3-3.4 | Identification, 1936-1990 (2 folders) |
| 3.5 | Immigration, 1978-1981 |
| 3.6 | Internment, Palestine and Uganda, 1943-1946 |
| 3.7-3.8 OS 3 | Military service, 1938-1960 (2 folders) |
| 3.9 & 6 OS 4 | Newspaper clippings scrapbook, 1944-1990 |
| 3.10-3.12 | Photograph album: <i>Supermarket, synagogue, R.A.F project, church designs</i> , approximately 1950s-1970s (3 folders) |
| 7 | Plan Album, 1951-1974 and undated |
| 4.1 | Professional documents, approximately 1935-1978 |
| 4.2 | Restitution, 1963-1972 |
| 4.3 | <i>Selected Samples of Work Designed and Supervised by Imre Rozsa and Associated</i> , undated |
| 4.4 | Volunteer service, 1984-1988 |
| 4.5 | Writings, 1987-1989 |

Series 4: Eve Rozsa Senn papers, 1949-1975

| Folder | Title |
|---------|--|
| 4.6 | Biographical material, 1954-1975 |
| 4.7 | Fashion show, 1957 |
| 4.8-4.9 | Kenya High School, 1957-1963 (2 folders) |
| 4.10 | Musical training, 1954-1958 |
| 4.11 | Nairobi Jewish Community, 1952-1962 |
| 4.12 | Westlands School, 1949-1956 |

Series 5: Photographs and albums, approximately 1890-1960s

| Folder | Title |
|-----------|---|
| 8 & 4.13 | Liebschütz family album, approximately 1890-1930 |
| 9 | Imre and Lisa Rozsa album, approximately 1937-1944 |
| 4.14-4.16 | Rozsa family album, approximately 1950s (3 folders) |
| 4.17-4.19 | Rozsa family photographs and clippings, approximately 1960s and 1970s (3 folders) |