

Quelle: Informationen von Dritten

Document Archive of Elsa Gabba, later Elsa Tamara Lieber

Biographical note

Elsa Gabba was born in Vienna 07.02.1927 to Josefine Gabba (Nussbaum) and David Gabba. She had one older sister, Ida/Jehudit and one younger sister, who died at the age of 9 in the year 1934. The family of Josefine Gabba came from the Austrian area of Schneeberg from the towns Lackenbach and Puchberg. They moved to Vienna probably around 1900.

Elsa Gabba left Vienna on January 14th 1939 on a Kindertransport headed to Scandinavia. Her sister Ida/Jehudit left soon after in June 1939 to Palestine (as the letters showed, it took her five weeks to get to Palestine). Tamara's mother Josefine Gabba had several siblings, all living in Vienna (Elsa, Hinda and Willi Nussbaum). Tamara's grandmother Jetty Nussbaum was also living in Vienna.

Josefine Gabba, who was born 1899, was deported on 5th of March 1941 to Modliborzyce and subsequently killed by the Nazis. From the date of her daughter Tamara's departure in January 1939 till her deportation in March 1941 she wrote her daughter in Finland more than 100 letters. Elsa's grandmother Jetty Nussbaum (born Spiegel) came to Theresienstadt in June 1943 and died there only two months later in August 1943.

Elsa's father was a textile merchant in Antwerp in 1938, who moved to Brussels in 1941 and fled to France in 1942 and subsequently tried to flee from the Nazis in the beginning 1944 to Italy. From there he escaped to USA and arrived in New York in August 1944 where he was placed in the refugee-camp FDR Shelters Refugees in Oswego, NY. He was released with the majority of refugees in December 1945. From there he made his way to New York, remarried and stayed in contact with his daughter till the early 80s. Letters from Antwerp 1939, Brussels 1941/42, France 1943, Italy 1944, Oswego 1944/45, New York-Antwerp 1946-1983.

After Elsa Gabba's arrival in Korsnäs, Finnland, where she was placed in the care of foster parents, she immediately built up a network of the German speaking Kindertransport- children. Since there was already an infrastructure of the Zionist youth movement – Hachshara - in place since 1934, she founded a local chapter of this movement. This chapter was named Plugah Baderech in Korsnäs. Through this network, which was mainly based in Sweden, she met her future husband David Lieber, who was also a child of the Kindertransporte from Gelsenkirchen, Germany. David Lieber was active in the Stockholm Zionist Youth Movement and was taking care of the Kindertransport-children in the area of Stockholm. Hundreds of letters were exchanged between Elsa, who took on the name Tamara, and David between summer 1943-1946. Elsa/Tamara and David Lieber eventually married and moved to Tel Aviv.

Since Tamara was very active in the Zionist movement and in contact with the children of the Kindertransport in Scandinavia, dozens of letters were sent to her from the Kindertransport-children in Scandinavia, mainly Sweden and from the Zionist Youth Movements and their leaders.

Listing of letters

A) Letters from the grandmother Jetti Nussbaum to Tamara:

3 letters from 1941/42, the last letter was sent only 10 days before her deportation to Theresienstadt. Additionally the grandmother also writes several lines in the letters that her daughter, the mother of Tamara, wrote her from 1939-1941.

B) Letters from Josefina Gabba to Tamara:

The letters start immediately after Tamara left on the 14th of January 1939, on the 20th of January 1939 and the last letter was sent the 2nd of March 1941 two days prior to her deportation. There are more than 280 written pages and more than 100 individual letters. The letters describe the pain of her mother being separated from her child and her hopes to be reunited with her and her father soon. She describes her environment and different ways how the Jewish families of Vienna tried to leave Austria. She mentions Friends and family and where they are going and how the live situation presented to her between 1939 and 1941. In December 1940 she tried to escape with Josef Schleich in a clandestine transport but she could not pass the border and had to go back to Vienna. She writes about this incident in her letter from the 26.12.1940.

C) Letters from the father:

Same as the letters from the mother, the letters start in January 1939 from Antwerp where the father was working. At that moment he was already waiting for papers to go to America. Till 1944 he wrote her about 100 letters consisting of more than 200 written pages. From his stay in Oswego (August 1944 - December 1945) there are about 70 letters which equal up to 140 handwritten pages. (A small file of newspaper clippings on the refugees in Oswego which Tamara collected from the international press 1945). Some of them bare the colored stripes of the camps-censor. After his release from Oswego, David Gabba settled in New York and kept writing to his daughter till late 1970s. There are about 100 letters from the late 40s describing his arrival as a Jewish refugee in America. About 70 letters 1950 - early 80s.

D) Letters from Tamara's aunts and uncles:

About 50 written pages 1940-1946. Some of her family members survived the Holocaust and started to write her immediately and started writing to her as soon as the 25th March of 1945. These early letters till 1946 bare the seal of the "Österreichische Zensurstelle". Her family describes their lack of food in Vienna and the hope that the SS criminal Brunner, who sent 50.000 Jews of Vienna to Poland "and your mother" will face trial.

E) Letters from Tamara's sister Ida (Jehudit) and their cousin Max (Chanan):

The letters from her sister Ida start in March 1933 and end in 1947. The first letters were written in Vienna and the subsequent letters came from Haifa and Tel Aviv. The letters show how the family corresponded from Palestine to Finland,

from Finland to Vienna and vice-versa. Like Tamara, her sister went to Palestine in an organized transport from Vienna and had to find her way in Palestine. She left on 29th April 1939 from Vienna. Her cousin Max, later know under the name Chanan also left Vienna in early 1933 and became a soldier after passing in Palestine after passing through Amsterdam and Stockholm. On his journey to Palestine and in Palestine he wrote to Tamara. 30 pages. In 1939 Tamara's sister also adds written lines in the letters from Tamara's mother to Tamara. Ida's letters to Tamara count 70 pages.

F) Letters from Tamara to David 08.1943-03.1949

About 80 letters on 200 written pages describing her life in Korsnäs and her work with the children of the Kindertransporte. Day to day life in her foster family and her Zionist activities. Romantic as well philosophic correspondence with David Lieber, her future husband. She mentions in her letters to David that the local press often visited the Zionist youth home and took pictures of the 43 youngsters. There is also a small file of these newspaper clippings and photographs of the camp and their work. 1943-1945.

G) Letters from David Lieber to Tamara 08.1943-1949:

Same as above, about 100 letters and 250 written pages.

H) Various letters to Tamara, 1942-1946:

The letters originate mainly from German or Austrian children from the Kindertransporte, who were dispersed all over Sweden. They came from cities like Stockholm, Kristianstad, Tullstorp, Mora, Falun, Upps etc. The letters are mainly correspondences with children who seek her advice or are trying to relate to somebody Jewish in their home language. A part of the letters are dealing with different Zionist chapters in Sweden that were founded by the children of the Kindertransporte as a means of network. Some of the letters were sent to her by the Hechaluz Organisation of Sweden and their leaders like Hans Herbert Wellisch. There about 150 letters on about 340 written pages.

I) One file philosophical thoughts and poems and art-sketches by Tamara, about 50 pages.

J) One file documents from David Lieber from his time in Stockholm, school report cards, birth certificates etc. 1938-1948. Letters from his family from Buenos Aires from the late 60s. About 30 documents.

K) One file different material, photo from Tamara Gabba, Photo of her sister's gravestone in Vienna, letters from a friend from Marseille, 1948, historical notes on socialism 1942 in German, about 30 pages.

All of the above material, except for a couple of letters, all written in German.