

Acc.12475  
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## **Inventory**

**Acc.12475**

**Rainer Wolff**

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Family correspondence, official documents and family photographs, 1924-1976, of Rainer, or Ray, Wolff (4 October 1924-14 August 2002). His father being of a Jewish family, Rainer Wolff was sent out of Germany to Scotland on a "Kindertransport", organised by the Quakers, in 1939. He first lived with a family in North Berwick, then moved with them to Roslin, then moved to Edinburgh. He attended Edinburgh Academy and later studied engineering and draughtsmanship. In 1947 he married Helen Weir Dunn Gollan (1923-2000), sister of John Gollan (1911-1977), socialist author and General Secretary of the British Communist Party (see Acc.11479). In 1949 he was able to visit his parents for the first time after ten years, but Scotland remained his home for the rest of his life.

His parents, Werner Wolff (1891-1969), a schoolteacher, and Elisabeth Wolff, née Dibbern (1896-1979), had originally intended to emigrate together with Rainer, who was their only child. However, the costs of this, as well as the fact that the USA and Great Britain would not take any more immigrants by this time, had forced them to remain in their hometown of Hamburg and only send their son to safety. They were initially able to remain in communication with Rainer with the help of a relative in Switzerland and the letter service of the Red Cross. They suffered under the anti-Jewish legislation of Nazi Germany, which resulted for example in Werner Wolff's forceful retirement in 1935, but his marriage to a non-Jewish wife initially protected him from deportation. In February 1945, however, this exemption was generally abolished and he was deported to Theresienstadt, where he remained until the end of the war while his wife stayed in Hamburg. Nobody else of his closer family survived. After the war he was reinstated as a schoolteacher and worked until his retirement in 1956.

Following his training in engineering, Rainer Wolff worked for United Wire and Cameron Ironworks until 1988. He had been interested in politics from a young age and met his wife as a fellow member of the Young Communist League. Having married into a large family of politically active communists, his life continued to be heavily influenced by politics. He was involved with the trade union movement and was an active member of the Edinburgh Trades Council, to whom he bequeathed a fund for the training of trade unionists.

The collection was kept by Elisabeth Wolff and is centred on her and the family's struggle to stay in touch with each other during and after the war. The letters and documents span the period 1928-1995 and cover private family matters. After the Second World War, the focus is mainly on the German side of the family. However, references to Rainer Wolff's Scottish career can be found in his letters to his mother and in the tributes read at his funeral. See also the papers of the Edinburgh Trades Council (Acc.11177).

*Deposited, 2002.*

1-8	Correspondence
9-10	Official documents
11	Diary
12-15	Family photographs
16	Tributes to Rainer Wolff

## **1-3 Correspondence of Rainer Wolff**

### **1 Rainer Wolff, letters, 1939-1946**

Letters, 1939-1946, of Rainer Wolff to his parents in Hamburg; also letters of his host family, the Patersons, Roslin, and other persons connected with his move to Scotland. Many of his communications are telegraph-like letters conveyed by the Red Cross.

### **2 Rainer and Helen Wolff, letters, 1947-1979**

Letters, 1947-1951 and 1971-1979, mainly of Rainer and Helen Wolff, to Elisabeth and Werner Wolff.

### **3 Letters to Rainer and Helen Wolff**

Letters, 1967-1993 and undated, to Rainer and Helen Wolff, by his mother and other relatives and friends.

## **4-5 Letters of Werner Wolff and family and friends**

### **4 Letters of Werner Wolff and Jewish family members and friends**

Letters and postcards, 1943-1964 and undated, of Werner Wolff to Elisabeth Wolff. With a death notice of Werner Wolff, ration cards issued to him under the name of Werner Israel Wolff, 3 handbills of theatre performances and newspaper cuttings.

Postcards, 1943-1944, of Werner Wolff's sister Edith Wolff (d. 1944).

Postcards and letter, 1939-1947, of Emma Wolff.

Postcards, 1943-1944, of Tebrich family to Werner Wolff.

Postcard, 1941, of unidentified friend to Elisabeth Wolff.

Letter, 1949, of the Jüdische Gemeinde zu Berlin, to Werner Wolff.

### **5 Letters of friends, post-war**

Letters, 1946-1971 and undated, of mostly Jewish friends of the family, partly emigrated, to Elisabeth and Werner Wolff, including a number of letters of condolence on the occasion of Werner Wolff's death in 1969.

**6-8 Letters of members of Elisabeth Wolff's family**

**6 Agnes Dibbern**

Letters, 1943-1971 and undated, of Elisabeth Wolff's mother Agnes Dibbern (1872-1971), mostly to Elisabeth Wolff. Also a small number of letters, 1928-1945, of close relatives of Agnes Dibbern.

**7 Hans Dibbern**

Letters, 1942-1957, of Elisabeth Wolff's brother Hans Dibbern (1902-1957), and some of his wife Hanna, mostly to Elisabeth Wolff. Arrested as a communist activist in 1933, Hans was sentenced to five years in prison and released in December 1938. In 1942 he was called up for military service and served until the end of the war, stationed for much of the time on a Greek island from where he wrote regularly. In 1945, after a brief spell as a prisoner of war, he was released to Bremen, his former place of residence. In July 1945 he went to Dresden in East Germany to fetch his family, but they were unable to return into the west and forced to remain in what became the German Democratic Republic. The folder also includes Hans Dibbern's death certificate and biographical notes made by his sister. Letters of his children, Anna, Rudolf and Ursula, can be found in folder 8.

**8 Letters of other members of the Dibbern family**

Letters, 1943-1944, of Elisabeth Wolff's sister Wilma Reglin née Dibbern (d. 1974) to Elisabeth Wolff. With death notices of Wilma Reglin and her husband Otto Reglin (d. 1971).

Letters, 1935-1941, of Elisabeth Wolff's sister Ilse Goebel (d. 1941) to members of her family. With two photographs.

Undated draft letter of Elisabeth Wolff to Ilse's husband Ernst Goebel

Letter, 1950, of Ernst Goebel to Elisabeth Wolff.

Letter, 1944, of Elisabeth Wolff to a relative named Erna.

Letter, 1945, of an unidentified relative to Elisabeth Wolff.

Letters, 1967-1969 and undated, of Anna, Rudolf and Ursula Dibbern, children of Hans Dibbern, to Elisabeth and Werner Wolff, and letters, 1968, of family friends concerning the death of Hanna Dibbern, Hans's wife.

**9-10 Official documents**

**9 Official documents of Rainer Wolff**

2 birth certificates, issued 1939 (2 copies) and 1944.

Certificate of baptism, 1937.

Ahnenpaß (genealogical tree) for Rainer Wolff.

German passport, issued in 1939.

Certificate of de-registration in Germany, 1939.

2 British passports.

Extract of an entry in a register of marriages, recording the marriage of Rainer Wolff and Helen Weir Dunn Gollan, 22 March 1947.

Certificate of Naturalization, 1948, for Rainer Wolff.

Declaration of Acquisition of British Nationality, 1948, of Helen Wolff.

Correspondence relating to payments to which Rainer Wolff was entitled according to the Federal Compensation Law.

Duplicate of contract of employment, 1964, of Rainer Wolff at United Wire Works Ltd.

Letter, 1969, of the Amtsgericht Hamburg to Rainer Wolff, with a photocopy of his father's will.

## **10 Official documents of Werner and Elisabeth Wolff**

Marriage certificate, 1895, of Elisabeth Wolff's parents Magnus Dibbern and Agnes Eigendorff.

Extract of a register of births, 1915, recording the birth of Elisabeth Wolff, 1896.

Extract of a register of baptisms, 1902, recording the baptism of Elisabeth Wolff in 1886.

Certificate of confirmation, 1910, of Elisabeth Wolff.

Marriage certificate, 1923, original and 2 photocopies, of Werner and Elisabeth Wolff.

German identity card, issued 1962, of Werner Wolff.

Diploma and manuscript copy, 1920, of successful completion of teacher's training, of Elisabeth Wolff.

Contract of employment, 1921, of Elisabeth Wolff, and letter of dismissal, 1923, following her marriage.

Certificate of re-entry into the protestant church, 1933, of Elisabeth Wolff.

Death certificate, 1945, of Magnus Dibbern.

Official birthday and anniversary cards, 1952 and undated, to Werner Wolff.

Extract of a register of baptisms, 1971, recording the baptism of Magnus Dibbern in 1868.

Death certificate, 1979, of Elisabeth Wolff.

Documents and correspondence, 1979-1980, sent to Rainer Wolff, concerning Elisabeth Wolff's funeral and her and Werner Wolff's grave.

Documents concerning their persecution under the National Socialists:

2 letters, 1960, concerning payments to Elisabeth Wolff according to the Federal Compensation Law.

2 certificates, 1961 and [1964], of the Jüdischer Nationalfonds, stating that Elisabeth and Werner Wolff planted trees in commemoration of relatives.

Yellow star-shaped badge ("Judenstern") worn by Jews from 1941 onwards.

Draft letter, 1995, of Rainer Wolff to his niece Maren, detailing the fate of his parents before and during the war.

Overview of Werner Wolff's life, probably compiled by Maren, 1995.

## **11 Childhood diary**

Diary, 1924-1932, kept by his parents, recording the stages of development of Rainer Wolff's early childhood, especially his speech development.

## **12-15 Photographs**

**12** Photographs, c. 1880-c.1970, of members of the Wolff and Dibbern families and of family friends.

**13** Album of family photographs, 1895-1958.

**14** Album of photographs, mostly of Rainer Wolff, 1926-1937.

**15** Album of photographs of a visit, 1957, of Elisabeth and Werner Wolff to Scotland.

## **16 Tributes to Rainer Wolff**

Photocopies of tributes, 2002, read at Rainer Wolff's funeral.

Photocopy of an obituary, 2002, from the *South Edinburgh Echo*.

Print-out of the on-line *Scottish and Edinburgh Trade Union News*, 2003, containing information about the Ray Wolff Memorial Trust.