

Julie Glaser (1878 - 1941 deported)

Matron of the hospital of the Jewish Frankfurt am Main community

...for the comfort of the sick and to the glory of Judaism...”

- as long-standing matron of Frankfurt's Jewish hospital on Gagernstrasse Julie Glaser matched her action to the mission statement of Jewish nursing (cf. Feldmann 1901).

This article is the first biographical report about Julie Glaser; it is to be continued.

Origin

Julie Glaser was born in the Bavarian-Franconian diocesan city of Würzburg on October 7th, 1878 (1877 according to Strätz 1989, page 193). She was part of the Jewish minority, but also influenced by the Catholic milieu in which she grew up.

Both of her parents came from lower and middle Franconian Judaism of Bavaria. The father Max (Marx) Glaser, a tradesman, was born in Thüngen on April 4th, 1844. Due to the high percentage of Jews in its population, the small village in the Spessart region belonged to the so-called “Jewish villages”: The biggest Jewish synagogue community of today's Main-Spessart district lived and worked in Thüngen until its extermination in 1942. Max Glaser moved with his parents, Babette Glaser née Amson and the tradesman Jakob Glaser, to Würzburg, got the right of domicile in 1874 and the rights of citizenship in 1892. He ran a wine wholesale business for many years and was last the owner of a real estate agency. Being resident at former Haugerring 14 (today about Haugerring 7) he died in Würzburg on 3rd or 4th July, 1909 (Strätz 1989, page 193).

Julie Glaser's mother Rosa Glaser née Regensburger was born in Feuchtwangen on March 13th, 1851. Since the 13th century Jews were residents of the middle Franconian small town, among them ancestors of the well-known writer Lion Feuchtwanger. Later, Rosa Glaser lived together with her parents, Clara Regensburger née Cohn and the leather trader Nathan Regensburger, in Rothenburg ob der Tauber, which also has a rich Jewish history. There she married Max Glaser in 1874 and moved with him to Würzburg. Beyond this, it is only known of Julie Glaser's mother, widow since 1909, that she either moved away or died in 1930 (Strätz 1989, page 193).

Family history

Julie Glaser was the third child and the first daughter of Rosa and Max Glaser. She had two older and four younger siblings. The eldest brother, Adolf Glaser, was born in Würzburg on 12th March 1875. After having completed his medical studies he started to practice as a physician in Mannheim and as a ship's doctor. He died in Straßburg (Elsass, France) on July 10th, 1914. Julie Glaser's younger brother Jakob Glaser was born in Würzburg on October 16th, 1881. He already died presumably in Neuendettelsau (Middle Franconia, Bavaria) in October 1900.

Leo Glaser

A distinguished career was made by Julie Glaser's second brother, the chemist, pharmacist,

businessman and politician Dr. phil. Leo Glaser, born in Würzburg on May 28th, 1876. After having completed his studies in Würzburg, he earned his doctorate in 1901 under Prof. Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen, discoverer of X-rays and first Nobel Prize winner for physics. Leo Glaser combined scientific skills with entrepreneurial cleverness. Soon it took him from Bavaria to today's Bad Doberan near Rostock (Mecklenburg-West Pomerania): There the entrepreneur, newspaper publisher and retired city councilor Reinhold Rudloff transferred the professional management of Haliflor-Company GmbH, a "thriving chemical factory for perfumeries and cosmetics" (Palme 2002, page 147), to him. When Reinhold Rudloff died in 1904, Leo Glaser became facility manager and by marriage with the daughter Elsa Bitt née Rudloff (1873-1947) also officially his successor in the company in 1906. Elsa Glaser brought two daughters into the marriage: the later well-known Rostock painter Kate Diehn-Bitt (1900-1978) and her older sister Annemarie. Leo Glaser and she had a daughter, Lili, (born on November 29th, 1910 in Doberan), who was Julie Glaser's niece. Leo Glaser increased the know-how of Haliflor (to which also belonged a Cognac store) and continued to build up the international business relationships. He officiated as president of the Mecklenburg Chamber of Commerce in Rostock from 1924 to 1928; the Rostock university appointed him as an honorary member. Also politically engaged, Leo Glaser was one of the co-founders of the German Democratic Party in Mecklenburg in 1919. His various merits were forgotten in the Nazi era (cf. the informative dissertation Leimkugel 1999 on the lives of further chemists and pharmacists who were persecuted under anti-Semitic measures.) In 1938 Julie Glaser's brother was temporarily imprisoned; his company fell into the hands of the Nazis. From 1935 until the end of the war in 1945 the Glaser couple lived in very humble circumstances, isolated from its non-Jewish relatives and friends, even from Elsa Glaser's daughters Annemarie and Käthe in order not to endanger them. Leo Glaser could only escape the deportations since his non-Jewish wife stood by him. His as "half-Jewish" persecuted daughter Lili Hahn née Glaser emigrated, together with her husband, to the USA in 1941. Her non-Jewish half-sister, the artist Käthe Diehn-Bitt, recorded the humiliations, threats and destructions of the Nazi era in impressive "concentration camp pictures" (see Palme 2002). After the end of the war, the Soviet authorities appointed Leo Glaser to head the Finance Office, but at the same time he helped to build up the Liberal Democratic Party of Germany (LDPD) in Mecklenburg. Since he did not see any democratic future in the Soviet Occupation Zone, Leo Glaser gave up the office as councilor for finances which he had taken as a member of the LDPD in 1946. After his wife's death, he emigrated in 1947 to live with his daughter Lili in New York, where he died on 27th or 28th June 1950. Lili Hahn, née Glaser, from a solid middle class home, earned her living in exile temporarily as a dental assistant. She was the last surviving member of the Glaser family.

Emma, Cilli and Ida Glaser

Julie Glaser shared a particularly close relationship with her younger sisters Emma and Cilli Glaser. Contrary to the conservative marriage and maternity model which dominated until the 1960's, all three remained unmarried and worked in professions: Julie Glaser became a nurse. Emma Glaser, born on September 10th, 1880, practiced as a dentist (dentist without any university exam, with state training course and health insurance license) in Würzburg. Cilli Glaser, born on February 11th, 1883, was a qualified secretary and worked as an employee with the Christian Würzburg Luitpold Hospital as well as a private secretary. She went to Munich in 1934. The youngest of the four sisters, Ida Glaser, born on September 25th, 1884, was employed as an accountant and a bank clerk. There were also close connections with her: Like Julie Glaser, Ida Glaser did war service as a nurse during the First World War; since 1927 she also lived in Frankfurt am Main. Her niece Lili Hahn assumed that she also remained unmarried and died prior to the deportations.

The way to becoming a matron

Socialization

In her childhood and adolescence Julie Glaser was already formed and biographically prepared for a leading position in nursing management or as a hospital matron. She did not grow up in the lower middle class like most of the persons who performed nursing, but came from the middle class. The experiences she had had as a member of the long-discriminated Jewish minority intensified her efforts to achieve something really great. The two older brothers studied and all four sisters learned a profession, which could not be taken for granted by women in the German Empire. By caring for four younger siblings, including the apparently ailing young brother, who died early, Julie Glaser developed her sense of responsibility and organizational talent.

Career

Julie Glaser did not participate in any training on the job at a Christian hospital, but went to Frankfurt am Main, where an association for Jewish nurses had been founded in 1893, the first in the German Empire. A baptism, which would have made the admission to a Catholic or Protestant nurse association possible, was out of the question for her. The reason why Julie Glaser did only a shortened nurse training at the hospital of the Jewish community on Königswarterstrasse 26 ("Königswarter Hospital") in 1900 (cp. Steppe 1997, page 227), is unknown. After that she continued to work at the hospital as well as in nursing. In 1911 Julie Glaser rose to be the matron of the Straßburg Jewish hospital in Alsace (today's Clinique Adassa, Alsace / France), whose nursing service was provided by the Frankfurt association of Jewish nurses. Certainly, she had contact with her eldest brother, the ship's doctor Adolf Glaser, who died in Straßburg at just 39 years in 1914.

War nursing

At the beginning of the First World War in August 1914 patients left the Straßburg Jewish hospital for fear of occupation by French troops. However, Julie Glaser and her team of nurses - Blondine Brück, Jenny Cahn, Gertrud Glaser, Ricka Levy, Bella Peritz and Rahel (Recha) Wieseneck - made themselves immediately available to the military authorities for the care of the wounded. As a military hospital matron, Julie Glaser changed from the Jewish hospital to the fortress hospital XXII B, a former Lyceum, from where she organized war nursing: "This military hospital in Straßburg will soon become the main prison hospital for wounded from France, Russia, Italy, Romania, England and America and remained until November 1918" (Steppe 1997, page 217). About this Julie Glaser noted: "We worked, operated and dressed feverishly; on the average we had four to five hours sleep. [...] While dressing in the operating room you could do the most interesting studies of people [...]" (quoted from statements of accounts 1920, page 39). In November 1918 she returned together with her loyal colleagues to Frankfurt's Jewish hospital.

Recognition

About 1925 Julie Glaser followed the retired Minna Hirsch as matron of the hospital of the Frankfurt Jewish community (Wolff 2001, page 100); her colleague Sara Adelsheimer became matron of the sisterhood of the Frankfurt association for Jewish nurses. After Sara Adelsheimer had emigrated during the Nazi-era, Julie Glaser also directed the nursing home as matron. At Frankfurt's Jewish hospital she was one of the longest-serving nurses. Also due to her leading position and the resulting influence she had on nursing, her biography and the institutional history of the hospital are closely linked; she did not live to see its forced closing by the National Socialists. Two years before Julie Glaser had been recognized in the Jewish Bulletin on the occasion of her 40th anniversary of service as follows: "On August 15th, 1900, "Nurse Julie" started to serve as a nurse; for many years she has now been the honorable matron Julie Sara [sic!] Glaser of the hospital of the Jewish community and matron of the nurses home from which she once came as a young nurse herself. She has been serving for 40 years now, and this for many years in leading and executive positions. She has

introduced innumerable young nurses in the nursing home to their duties and skills and guided them to the same high and serious attitude towards the profession that lives within her." (Wertheimer 1940). The article is from the Frankfurt Jewish educationalist and author Dr. Martha Wertheimer (born 1890); she was deported to the Sobibor death camp in 1942.

NS period and deportation

The anti-Semitic persecution during the NS period increasingly threatened Emma Glaser's existence as a freelance dentist in Würzburg. In 1934 she left her native town and moved to Julie Glaser in Frankfurt, whose job was initially secured. It is still unknown when Cilli Glaser, who had probably been ousted from a non-Jewish post, arrived in Frankfurt. She found a job as an office worker at Frankfurt's Jewish hospital. The three sisters were reunited and could stand by each other; none of them emigrated. In 1941 - the year of their deportation - Julie, Emma and Cilli Glaser lived at Gärtnerweg 55. According to the transport list of the Gestapo area Frankfurt am Main they were deported to the Litzmannstadt ghetto (Lodz, Poland). Julie Glaser's colleagues, as well as Ilse Frohmann, were transported together with them. In the hell of Lodz their traces of life get lost; maybe the three sisters went on their final journey to an extermination camp together. Apart from them, 16 further relatives of the Glaser family were murdered (Palme 2002, page 186 Fn 100). At the time of their deportation Julie Glaser was 63, Emma Glaser 61 and Cilli Glaser 58 years old. They are among the victims of the Shoah who left no direct descendants and are now forgotten.

Judaism and memory work in Würzburg

At least since the 12th century Jews had been living in Würzburg. A Jewish community, rich in tradition, had emerged out of which came personalities such as Rabbi Seligmann Bär Bamberger (great grandfather of the social philosopher Erich Fromm), the psychoanalyst William G. Niederland, the lyricist Yehuda Amichai or the young poetess Marianne Dora Rein. After the Shoah a diversely active Jewish synagogue community could develop in Julie Glaser's native town again. It was brought into being by 21 surviving returnees from Theresienstadt and 38 displaced persons from other European countries. Thanks to the Jewish migration from Eastern Europe in the 1990s it now consists of about 1,100 members (as of 2008). In 1970 the new Würzburg synagogue was opened. Another milestone was the inauguration of the modern community and culture center "Shalom Europe" on October 23rd, 2006 (1. Cheschan 5767). The website www.shalomeuropa.de of the Würzburg Jewish community and Lower Franconia provides detailed information about Würzburg Jewish history.

Memory work is also done by the project Biographische Datenbank Jüdisches Unterfranken, the memorial initiative "stumbling blocks", the "registered association for Christian-Jewish cooperation in Würzburg and Lower Franconia" as well as by the journalist Roland Flade in the journalistic field. Much information with regard to Jewish Würzburg people were collected in a two-volume biographical handbook of the Würzburg city archives (cf. Strätz 1989). That was how a lot could be found out about Julie Glaser and her family history.

Birgit Seemann, 2010, updated 2018
(Translated by Yvonne Ford)

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