

FERENC HEVESI PAPERS, 1942-circa 1950
1990.245.23

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Ferenc Hevesi papers

Dates: 1942-circa 1950

Catalog number: 1990.245.23

Creator: Hevesi, Ferenc, 1898-1952.

Extent: 1 box (.5 linear feet)

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

Abstract: The collection documents the Holocaust experiences of Rabbi Ferenc Hevesi in Budapest, Hungary, including a fictionalized personal narrative about Ferenc's wartime experiences, correspondence, a speech, and copyprints.

Languages: Hungarian, English

Administrative Information

Access: There are no known restrictions on access to this material.

Physical access note: Negative in OS 1 not currently available for research

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Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Ferenc Hevesi papers (1990.245.23), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Eva Ehrlich donated the Ferenc Hevesi papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1990 and 1995. The accessions numbered 1990.245 and 1995.A.0144 have been incorporated into this collection.

Separated material: Ferenc Hevesi family collection

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

Processing history: Adam Fielding, July 2023

Biographical note

Ferenc Hevesi (1898-1952) was born in Lugos, Hungary (now Lugoj, Romania) to Simon (1868-1943) and Janka Hevesi (née Brody, 1864-1945). He had four siblings: Jenő (later Eugene, 1895-1983), Géza (1897-?), Imre (1904-1998), and Nóra (later Kürschner). Simon was the town's rabbi until 1905, when the family moved to Budapest.

Ferenc entered the National Rabbinical Training Institute in 1912. Following his graduation in 1922, Ferenc worked as a rabbi in the city of Székesfehérvár, Hungary. On November 2, 1922, he married Magda Rottenstein (1906-1977), and their daughter, Eva (1924-2009), was born two years later. In 1930, the family returned to Budapest, where they shared a large apartment with Ferenc's parents. Simon was the chief rabbi of Hungary, and Ferenc worked under his father at the Dohany Street synagogue. The combined household was very traditional, and they observed all of the holidays and ate exclusively kosher.

Around 1933, Ferenc, Magda, and Eva moved into their own apartment. In June 1938, Ferenc's brother, Jenő, who was a diplomat, changed his name to Eugene and immigrated to the United States with his wife and young son. In 1943 Ferenc's father Simon died, and he and a colleague succeeded him as co-chief rabbis of Hungary.

Following Hungarian attempts to sign an armistice with the Allies, the German army occupied Hungary on March 19, 1944. Jews were soon required to wear a yellow Star of David, and Eva was no longer allowed to attend school. Ferenc's family's valuables were confiscated, and they were removed from their apartment and forced into one they had to share with another family. The family was forced to relocate again, into a single room apartment crowded with 20 people.

On October 15, 1944, the radically antisemitic, German-backed Arrow Cross Party seized power of the Hungarian government. Ferenc was at the community center when Nazi and Arrow Cross soldiers arrived to arrest him. With the help of the gatekeeper, Ferenc managed to slip out and the family went into hiding. Ferenc hid in the home of a non-Jewish cousin of Magda's, while family friends helped Eva and Magda secure rented lodgings. Fearing discovery, Magda and

Eva moved every few days, aided by members of the underground resistance. In December, Ferenc was forced to leave his hiding spot, and was hidden in an apartment owned by a retired army colonel. Magda and Eva were later hidden in the same building in the basement with a group of non-Jewish Hungarians hiding from the ongoing air raids.

Their section of Budapest was liberated by the Soviet army on January 16, 1945. The family were reunited with Magda's parents, Moritz and Erna Rottenstein, who had survived in a Jewish hospital. Ferenc's mother starved to death in a sanatorium after the nurse who was caring for her began stealing her food.

In February 1945, Ferenc's family returned to their apartment, and recovered their stolen belongings. Ferenc became a chaplain for the Hungarian army, and returned to his former rabbinical duties. The American military mission arrived in Budapest, and Eva met a Hungarian-American soldier, Adrian Heller. They married on October 8, 1946, and Eva immigrated with him to the United States.

In the fall of 1946, Ferenc was sponsored by the American Joint Distribution Committee to deliver speeches in England and the United States on behalf of the Hungarian Jewry. On February 2, 1947, Ferenc and Magda attended Eva's religious wedding ceremony in New York City. While they were in the U.S., Ferenc was warned that he was accused of a crime, and that they should not return to Hungary.

Ferenc and Magda moved to Dalton, Georgia where he led a congregation. Eva and her husband divorced in 1949, and she joined her parents in Dalton. The family later moved to Washington, D.C. Eva married Bernard Ehrlich in 1950.

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the Holocaust experiences of Rabbi Ferenc Hevesi in Budapest, Hungary, including a fictionalized personal narrative about Ferenc's wartime experiences, correspondence, a speech, and copyprints.

The bulk of the collection consists of a fictionalized account of Ferenc's wartime experiences in Budapest, titled "Episode, novel by Francis Hevesi." The novel is a three-volume typescript set written in English. Other documents include two wartime letters written to Ferenc describing the situation in Hungary and asking for help locating a missing family member. Both of these letters include English translations provided by the donor. There is also a postwar letter from Ferenc to Bill Stern describing his wartime experience in Budapest, and an annotated copy of a speech given by Ferenc.

The photographs consist of seven copyprints depicting the German occupation of Hungary, members of the Ferenc Szálasi-led government and the Arrow Cross party (Nyilaskeresztes Párt), and the arrest of Jewish resister Robert Mandel. There is also a photograph depicting William Vasadi in his kitchen. William was the fiance of Ferenc's daughter Eva (later Eva Ehrlich) who was murdered by the Arrow Cross in 1944.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as a single series.

Indexing terms

Person:

Szálasi, Ferenc, 1897-1946.

Corporate:

Nyilaskeresztes Párt.

Topical Subject:

Jews--Hungary--Budapest.

Holocaust survivors.

Rabbis--Hungary--Budapest.

Geography:

Budapest (Hungary)

Genre/Form:

Photographs.

Letters.

CONTAINER LIST

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Letters and speech, 1942-circa 1946
1.2	Photographs, 1944
OS 1	Negative of William Vasadi photograph, 1944
1.3	Episode, book 1, circa 1950
1.4	Episode, book 2, circa 1950
1.5	Episode, book 3, circa 1950