

EMERGENCY RESCUE COMMITTEE COLLECTION

1991.242

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
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Descriptive summary

Title: Emergency Rescue Committee collection

Dates: 1913-1948

Accession number: 1991.242

Creator: Emergency Rescue Committee

Additional creator:

Extent: 9 folders

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

Abstract: The Emergency Rescue Committee collection documents the efforts of Varian Fry in assisting three of the more than 1,500 refugees he helped escape while living in France from 1940-1941. As a member of the Emergency Rescue Committee, Fry was sent to Marseille, France, to assist in the escape of prominent intellectuals and artists who were living in recently German-occupied France. The correspondence and cables concern Max Ernst, Elena Frank, and Wilhelm Herzog, in addition to a list of clients for the Emergency Rescue Committee that were living in various countries in 1943.

Languages: French, English

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), Emergency Rescue Committee collection, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: The International Rescue Committee donated the Emergency Rescue Committee collection to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives in 1991.

Related materials: The papers of Varian Fry are held in the Columbia University Archives in New York, New York. The records of the International Rescue Committee are held at Stanford University – Hoover Institution Library and Archives.

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

Processing history: Michael Folkerts, January 2015

Administrative history

The Emergency Rescue Committee was formed in 1940, shortly after the German occupation of France. Created by several political advocates, the committee raised money to help bring refugees over to the United States from France. Their representative, Varian Fry, was sent to live at the Hotel Splendide in Marseille, where many refugees fled to after the invasion of Paris. Sent there with a list of names, Fry would initiate an operation to rescue some of Europe's leading artists and intellectuals. As he began aiding those over the border, word spread and more came to Fry's hotel room begging for assistance.

Back in the United States, members of the Emergency Rescue Committee were able to convince President Roosevelt to authorize a limited number of "emergency visas." Even still, working with the State Department to allow refugees into the United States was difficult, and required constant communication. Back in France, Fry assisted refugees to cross the border into Spain and then Portugal, for travel into the U.S., or sometimes off of ships sailing illegally from Marseille. Others refugees would stay in Europe in other countries such as Spain and Switzerland. Fry spent 13 months in France, until his visa expired and would not be renewed by the U.S. State Department. By the time he was required to leave, Fry helped over 1,500 refugees escape from France to other safe countries.

The Emergency Rescue Committee would continue to provide assistance to refugees after Varian Fry's departure. The committee later merged with the International Relief Association, to form the International Rescue Committee in 1942.

Scope and content of collection

The Emergency Rescue Committee papers consists mainly of correspondence and cables concerning three refugees, and document the efforts taken in trying to assist in their escape from France. Wilhelm Herzog, whose papers are the most prominent in this collection, was a German historian of literature and culture. He wrote for several magazines and journals and wrote an encyclopedia of great figures in history. Elena Frank was the wife of Leonhard Frank, a German expressionist writer. Max Ernst was a popular surrealist painter. Also included in this collection is a list of Emergency Rescue Committee clients and their location.

System of arrangement

The Emergency rescue Committee collection is arranged into one series alphabetically by client, with correspondence arranged chronologically. The list of clients is at the end of the collection.

Indexing terms

Ernst, Max, 1891-1976.

Herzog, Wilhelm, 1884-1960.

Frank, Elena.

Fry, Varian, 1907-1967.

World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Rescue.

World War, 1939-1945--Jews--Rescue--France.

Emergency Rescue Committee

International Rescue Committee

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Correspondence, 1940-1945

Folder	Title
1	Ernst, Max, November, 1940-December, 1941
2	Frank, Elena, September, 1940-June, 1941
3-8	Herzog, Wilhelm, 1940-1945
9	List of clients in France, Switzerland, Spain, and North Africa, 1943