

**ANATOLE PONEVEJSKY PAPERS,  
approximately 1940-1953 (bulk 1940-1942)  
1999.107.100**

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW  
Washington, DC 20024-2126  
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**Descriptive summary**

Title: Anatole Ponevejsky papers

Dates: approximately 1940-1953 (bulk 1940-1942)

Accession number: 1999.107.100

Creator: Ponevejsky, Anatole, 1900-1969

Extent: 0.8 linear foot (1 box, 3 oversize folders)

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

Abstract: The Anatole Ponevejsky papers consist of photographs documenting Ponevejsky's work on behalf of Jewish refugees in Kobe, Japan in the early years of World War II and correspondence, printed materials, and reports documenting his continued work on behalf of Jewish refugees after he moved to the United States in the spring of 1941.

Languages: English, Yiddish

**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), Anatole Ponevejsky papers, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: Irene Borevitz donated the Anatole Ponevejsky papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 1999.

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

Processing history: Julie Schweitzer, August 2016

### **Biographical note**

Anatole Ponevejsky (1900-1969) was born in the Siberian city of Irkutsk. In the 1920s, he and his brothers David and Leo moved to Harbin, Manchuria, where they began a business of importing woolens from Japan. There he married Gita Preisman whose family had also come to Manchuria from Irkutsk. In 1935, Ponevejsky went to Japan to run the exports side of the business. He first settled in Yokohama where his daughter Tamara was born in 1935, and later moved to Kobe where his younger daughter Irene was born in 1940. He organized the Ashkenazi Jewish community of 25 families, renting a building on Yamamoto-Dori Street that housed a synagogue and community center. In 1940 and 1941, over two thousand Polish Jewish refugees arrived in Kobe. The entire Kobe Jewish community, spearheaded by Ponevejsky, his brother-in-law, Moise Moiseeff, and Leo Hanin, coordinated a massive refugee relief effort and successfully persuaded Japanese authorities to issue permits to extend the stay of refugees in Kobe. The communal organization, now known by its telegraphic acronym JEWCOM, also sent money for ship fares for refugees who were stranded in Vladivostok. When their funds ran low, they appealed to the JDC in New York for additional money to continue their relief efforts. Ponevejsky left Kobe for the United States in April 1941 to attend to medical problems. Gita and the two girls planned to follow Anatole shortly thereafter. While living with his cousin Gregory Toper in New York, Ponevejsky continued trying to find visas for the Polish refugees still in Japan and worked with the JDC to continue funding for the relief efforts. In the meantime, Gita and her two daughters left for the United States in November 1941, but became stranded in Manila following the American entry into World War II. Unable to leave the Philippines, they remained there for the duration of the war and only came to the United States in June 1945. After the war, Ponevejsky commuted between the United States and Japan where he operated a store in Tokyo where Chiune Sugihara briefly worked. He became president of the Tokyo Jewish Communal Association and established the Tokyo Jewish Community Center. The Ponevejsky family changed their name to Ponve after the war.

### **Scope and content of collection**

The Anatole Ponevejsky papers consist of photographs documenting Ponevejsky's work on behalf of Jewish refugees in Kobe, Japan in the early years of World War II and correspondence, printed materials, and reports documenting his continued work on behalf of Jewish refugees after he moved to the United States in the spring of 1941.

Correspondence consists of invitations, agendas, and telegrams documenting Ponevejsky's continued work on behalf of Jewish refugees after he moved to the United States in the spring of 1941, particularly regarding budgets, fundraising, visas, and the cases of 451 yeshiva students and rabbis in Japan.

Photographs depict Ponevejsky with fellow committee members and refugees in Kobe. Many of the photographs are accompanied by descriptive labels in both English and Yiddish.

Printed materials consist of two 1941 issues of *Jewish Journal and Daily News* and one 1942 issue of *Yiddisher Kemfer*.

Reports primarily consist of copies of financial, informational, statistical reports and name lists of refugees sent to Ponevejsky after he moved to the United States in the spring of 1941. The reports document income and expenses of the refugee program in Kobe; efforts to obtain visas, help refugees reach Kobe from Vladivostok, obtain visas, and depart to the US, Palestine, and elsewhere; cooperation with other Jewish relief organizations; organizational and personnel matters; housing and provisions for refugees; the specific case of 451 yeshiva students and rabbis; the deportation of remaining refugees in Kobe to Shanghai; the number of refugees arriving in and leaving Kobe; and individual cases.

### **System of arrangement**

The Anatole Ponevejsky papers are arranged as four series:

- Series 1: Correspondence, 1941-1942
- Series 2: Photographs, approximately 1940-1941
- Series 3: Printed materials, 1941-1942
- Series 4: Reports, approximately 1940-1953 (bulk 1940-1942)

### **Indexing terms**

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

Jews--Japan--History--20th century.

Jewish refugees--Japan--Kōbe-shi.

Kōbe-shi (Japan)

Photographs.

## **CONTAINER LIST**

### **Series 1: Correspondence, 1941-1942**

Box/Folder	
1.1	Invitations and agendas, 1941-1942
1.2	Telegrams, 1941

### **Series 2: Photographs, approximately 1940-1941**

Box/Folder	
1.3-1.6	Jewish community in Kobe, approximately 1940-1941 (4 folders)

**Series 3: Printed materials, 1941-1942**

Box/Folder	
OS 1	<i>Jewish Journal and Daily News</i> , 1941 May 28
OS 2	<i>Jewish Journal and Daily News</i> , 1941 November 10
1.7	<i>Yiddisher Kemfer</i> , 1942 October 16

**Series 4: Reports, 1940-1942, approximately 1945-1953**

Box/Folder	
1.8, OS 3	Charts and graphs, 1940-1941 (2 folders)
1.9	Financial reports, 1941
1.10	Informational reports, 1941-1942, approximately 1945-1953
1.11	Name lists, 1941
1.12	Statistical reports, 1941