

HESS FAMILY PAPERS, circa 1915-1944 and undated 2000.130.2

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
100 Raoul Wallenberg Place SW
Washington, DC 20024-2126
Tel. (202) 479-9717
e-mail: reference@ushmm.org

Descriptive summary

Title: Hess family papers

Dates: circa 1915-1944 and undated

Accession number: 2000.130.2

Creator: Hess (Family : Berga, Germany)

Extent: 0.5 linear feet (5 folders and 3 oversize folders)

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

Abstract: The Hess family papers consist of original and photocopies of biographical material, emigration and immigration material, newspapers, and a diary relating to Adolf and Jette Hess and their daughters Ilse and Vera Hess' voyage on the MS *St. Louis*, their disembarkation and experiences in France, and their eventual emigration to Cuba in 1941 and the United States in 1944.

Languages: German, French, Spanish, 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), Hess family papers (2000.130.2), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Vera Mahler donated the Hess family papers to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in 2000 and 2003. The accessions previously numbered 2000.130 and 2004.9.1 have been incorporated in this collection.

Separated material: A ribbon given to Vera for completion of a course during her time in Cuba was catalogued separately as an object.

Related material: An oral history given by Vera Mahler was recorded by the USC Shoah Foundation Institute. Onsite access to the oral histories is provided by the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

Processing history: Morgan Voth, February 2019

Biographical note

Vera Mahler (née Hess, b. 1923) was born in Berga an der Elster to Adolf Hess (1887-1944) and Jette Hess (nee Falk, b. 1896) and had one sister, Ilse (1927-?). Adolf and Jette married in 1922 and lived in Berga where Adolf worked as a manufacturer. Adolf was arrested and sent to Buchenwald concentration camp during Kristallnacht in 1938. He was released four weeks later after promising to leave Germany. Vera and her family left for Cuba aboard the MS *St. Louis* in 1939. After the ship was denied entry in Cuba and returned to Europe, they disembarked in France. Vera and Ilse were sent to Villa Helvetia, an Oeuvre de Secours aux Enfants (OSE) children's home near Montmorency. They stayed in the home for a year before being sent to another OSE home in Montintin for two years, unaware of where their parents were. Adolf was in a series of internment camp, but he was able to obtain visas for Cuba in 1941. Adolf and Jette met Ilse and Vera in Marseille, France before traveling to Spain where they boarded a ship for Cuba. They lived in Cuba for two years before family members in the United States were able to provide affidavits and secure paperwork for immigration to America. Adolf died in 1944, before his family was able to leave Cuba. In mid-1944, Jette, Ilse, and Vera immigrated to the United States. Ilse died prior to 1999 and Vera had two daughters, Joan and Nancy.

Scope and content of collection

The Hess family papers consist of original and photocopies of biographical material, emigration and immigration material, newspapers, and a diary relating to Adolf and Jette Hess and their daughters Ilse and Vera Hess' voyage on the MS *St. Louis*, their disembarkation and experiences in France, and their eventual emigration to Cuba in 1941 and the United States in 1944.

Biographical material includes documents relating to Adolf's service in World War I including a certificate for his service, passports for Vera and Jette, paperwork for payment of Adolf's funeral, and copy of Vera's birth certificate.

The collection includes a photocopy of a diary written by Adolf while aboard the MS *St. Louis* and in France as well as a translation of the diary. In his diary Adolf writes about his family's experiences aboard the *St. Louis* and the struggles of trying to immigrate to Cuba or the United States.

Education documents include certificates for Vera during her time in Montintin and Cuba including a certificate for a first aid class, report cards from ORT courses, and a letter of reference from Vera's work in Cuba as well as newspapers and articles relating to Vera and her education.

Emigration and immigration material includes passenger identification cards for Jette and Ilse, a good conduct certificate, a ticket for the *St. Louis*, Cuban refugee cards, correspondence relating to obtaining visas, safe conduct passes for Adolf, Vera, and Jette, and an affidavit for Jette.

System of arrangement

The Hess family papers are arranged as a single series.

Indexing terms

Person:

Hess, Adolf, 1887-1944.

Hess, Jette, 1896-?

Hess, Ilse, 1927-?

Hess, Vera, 1923-

Corporate:

St. Louis (Ship)

Topical Subject:

Jewish refugees.

World War, 1939-1945--Personal narratives.

Geography:

Cuba--Emigration and immigration--History--20th century.

France.

Berga (Thuringia, Germany)

Genre/Form:

Affidavits.

Diaries.

Passports.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1: Hess family papers, circa 1915-1944 and undated

Folder	Title
1 of 5	Biographical material, 1922-1944
2 of 5	Diary, circa 1939-1941
3 of 5	Translation, undated
4 of 5 OS 1-3	Education documents, 1932-1942 (4 folders)
5 of 5	Emigration and immigration, 1939-1944