

JACK AND SYLVIA HEISLER PAPERS, 1958-1981
2015.498.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Jack and Sylvia Heisler papers

Dates: 1958-1981

Accession number: 2015.498.1.

Creator: Heisler, Jack.

Extent: 7 folders

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

Abstract: Correspondence, forms and other records pertaining to the Holocaust-era restitution claims of Jack Heisler and Sylvia Stern Heisler, filed against the West German government, and related to their internment as forced laborers at Auschwitz, Sömmerda, and other camps.

Languages: German, 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.

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Preferred citation: (Identification of item), Jack and Sylvia Heisler papers (2015.498.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC.

Acquisition information: Gift of Steve Heisler and Cynthia Heisler Wishkovsky, August 2015.

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

Processing history: Processed by Brad Bauer, November 2015.

Biographical note

Jakob (Jack) Heisler was born in Bilky, Czechoslovakia (present-day Bilky, Ukraine) on 1 March 1924, the son of Samuel and Serena (née Davidovich) Heisler. In March 1944, he was forced into the ghetto of Beregszász (present-day Berehove, Ukraine), where he remained until May 1944, when he and his family were sent on a transport to Auschwitz, where he was separated from his parents, who he never saw again. He remained at the camp as a forced laborer, but his health steadily declined until the time in which he was liberated by Soviet forces in January 1945. After that, he was hospitalized in the city of Auschwitz (Oświęcim), but when he was well enough, he returned to Bilky, seeking any traces of his family, from whom he had been separated. When he did not find them, he left for Paris, but as his health worsened upon his arrival in France, he was admitted to the Rothschild Hospital in early 1946. Following his discharge from the hospital, he immigrated to the United States in July 1946, eventually settling in Buffalo, New York. Of his eight siblings, three sisters (Leona, Ethel, and Rose) immigrated to the United States prior to the war; Bernard immigrated to the United States after the war, but died shortly after his arrival; Emanuel died in a forced labor camp, and his sister Maria was with Jakob in the camp, but died of typhus shortly after liberation; and brothers David and Edward, both of whom had been imprisoned in camps, immigrated to the United States after the war.

Sylvia Heisler was born Cyla Stern in Beregszász, Czechoslovakia on 11 June 1930, the daughter of Icik and Roza (nee Schwartz) Stern. She attended school in Beregszász from 1936 – 1942, but from March 1944 on, was detained in the Beregszász ghetto. In May 1944, she was sent on a transport to Auschwitz, and in July was sent as a forced laborer to Gelsenkirchen, Germany. In September 1944, she was transported to Sömmerda, where she was a forced laborer for Rheinmetall-Borsig until April 1945, when she and other prisoners were led on a death march, and liberated by Soviet troops in May 1945.

Scope and content of collection

The Jack and Sylvia Heisler papers contain correspondence, forms and other records pertaining to the Holocaust-era restitution claims of Jack Heisler and Sylvia Stern Heisler, filed against the West German government between 1958 and 1970, and related to their internment as forced laborers at Auschwitz, Sömmerda, and other camps.

Jack Heisler's earliest compensation claims in these files date from the late 1958 through 1961, when he filed claims on behalf of himself and his brother Edward, at the office that handled compensation claims for the state of Rheinland-Pfalz in Trier, Germany. He based his claims on damages sustained to personal property, as well as his inability to continue his education and practice a profession, and these claims were denied in 1961. The documents from this period consist largely of correspondence between Hugo Hoffman, an attorney in Buffalo, New York, who was representing him in his claim, and Max Cahn, an attorney in Frankfurt who was submitting the documentation before the agency in Trier. He subsequently filed compensation claims in Trier for damages to his health, and the present files, beginning in 1964, document the efforts of his broker in the United States, G.S. Keso, working with an attorney in Munich, Harry Wolf, to obtain a favorable outcome for him. Despite repeated medical examinations, the court in Trier denied his claims in 1970, and the correspondence ends shortly after

that, save for a form letter from 1981 from a different law office, pertaining to claims against the Czechoslovakian government, for confiscated property.

The compensation claims from Sylvia Heisler include claims for injuries sustained and both physical and psychological suffering, as well as claims for compensation for loss of freedom and inability to pursue an education or professional occupation, all due to her imprisonment in concentration camps from 1944-1945. The papers regarding these claims are divided into three files: general correspondence, medical records, and claims directed at specific companies.

The "general correspondence" folder consists primarily of correspondence with the broker handling her case in the United States, G.S. Keso, and his German counterparts, who often sent rulings from the courts handling her claims, as well as requests for further documents or information from her. These claims were argued on her behalf in Darmstadt, Germany, between 1958 and 1969, with an initial ruling in 1967 rejecting her claims, and a subsequent ruling in her favor being obtained in 1969. The "medical records" folder contains letters from physicians in the United States, attesting to various physical and psychological ailments that were attributed to her mistreatment in the camps, and which were meant to be supporting documentation for her claims. In addition, the documents in the folder marked "Compensation Treuhand" show her efforts to obtain compensation from the specific companies that ran the forced labor camps where she was interned. She unsuccessfully pursued claims against Krupp and Siemens, but also filed a more detailed claim in 1967, through the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, from the Rheinmetall Fund, which sought to compensate forced laborers who worked for AG Rheinmetall, as Mrs. Heisler had at Sömmerda. This claim seems to have been successful, and documents include affidavits given by Mrs. Heisler as a witness for other forced laborers she knew from that time, including her sister, Lillian Hahn, who also served as witnesses on her behalf, as well as the application forms used, and a letter from her representative announcing a settlement payment in 1968.

System of arrangement

The files are arranged alphabetically by claimant, and then alphabetically by folder title, and chronologically within.

Indexing terms

Rheinmetall-Borsig AG.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Ukraine--Berehove.

Jews--Ukraine--Berehove.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Ukraine--Bilky (Zakarpats'ka oblast')

Jews--Ukraine--Bilky (Zakarpats'ka oblast')

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Reparations.

World War, 1939-1945--Conscript labor--Europe, Eastern.

World War, 1939-1945--Conscript labor--Germany.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Germany--Reparations.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Reparations--Cases.

Sömmerda (Concentration camp)

Jewish refugees--New York (State)

CONTAINER LIST

Folder	Title
	Heisler, Jack
	Correspondence
1	1958-1961
2	1964-1966
3	1967-1971, 1981
4	Medical statements, 1965-1966
	Heisler, Sylvia
5	Compensation Treuhand, G.m.b.H., 1962-1966
6	General correspondence, 1958-1979
7	Medical statements, 1965-1967