

HAFFTKA AND JONISCH FAMILIES PHOTOGRAPHS, CIRCA 1918-1952

2016.545.1

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives
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Descriptive summary

Title: Hafftko and Jonisch families photographs

Dates: circa 1918-1952

Accession number: 2016.545.1

Creator: Hafftko (Family : Częstochowa, Poland)
Jonisch (Family Żarki, Poland)

Extent: 14 folders

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

Abstract: The collection documents the Holocaust era experiences of the Hafftko family of Częstochowa, Poland and the Jonisch family of Żarki, Poland. Included are photographs of Ola Hafftko (née Jonsich), her husband Aleksander Hafftko, and their daughter Sylvia Hafftko (now Sylvia Smoller), along with other family members. Also included are photographs of the *Hie Maru*, the ship that Ola, Aleksander, and Sylvia sailed on from Kobe, Japan to Seattle, Washington in 1941 after obtaining Japanese visas from Chiune Sugihara. Additionally, there is an identification card of Ola's from Warsaw, Poland.

Languages: Polish, 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), Hafftk and Jonisch families photographs (2016.545.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Sylvia Smoller in 2016.

Related archival materials: The United States Holocaust Memorial Museum has oral histories conducted with Ola Hafftk (1995.A.1215) and Sylvia Smoller (1995.A.0122.738).

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, March 2017

Biographical note

Rachela Ola Jonisch (b. 1902) was born in 1902 in Żarki, Poland to Mordecai and Esther Jonisch (née Fiefkopf, b. 1879). Mordecai owned a leather business in Żarki. Ola had four brothers, Moniek (Moses), David (b. 1908), Sam, and Schlomo; and two sisters, Hilda and Sophie.

Aleksander Zygmunt Hafftk (1892-1964) was born in Częstochowa, Poland. He had at least two brothers, Mordechai and Sam; and two sisters, Ella and Jadwiga. He was a veteran of World War I, serving in one of Józef Piłsudski's Legions, and was also a journalist and historian.

While Ola was studying in Częstochowa, Aleksander became her English tutor. After school, she returned to Żarki to help with her father's business, but kept in touch with him. They eventually married and settled in Warsaw, Poland. Their daughter, Sylvia (later Sylvia Smoller) was born in 1932.

After Piłsudski's coup in 1926, Aleksander became the highest-ranking Jewish civil servant in the government, eventually serving as a counselor on Jewish Affairs to the Polish Interior Ministry. When he learned of a proposed ban on kosher slaughter, he assisted Agudat Yisrael in fighting the ban on the grounds that it was anti-Semitic, but was forced out of his position. After losing his government job, Aleksander joined a group dedicated to assisting German Jewish refugees resettle in Poland. After the German invasion of Poland in 1939, the family sought ways to escape Warsaw. Aleksander was able to commandeer a car from a police station, and the family went to Wilno, Poland (now Vilnius, Lithuania).

They remained in Wilno for about a year. They learned about the Japanese consul to Lithuania, Chiune Sugihara, who, in opposition to the Japanese government, was issuing transit visas to Jews trying to escape Europe. The Hafftkas were able to secure transit visas, and then American visas from the American consulate in Moscow. They traveled along the Trans-Siberian railroad to Vladivostok, Russia where they took a boat to Japan. They remained in Japan for around 4 months, then sailing to Seattle, Washington in March 1941 from Kobe. The family settled in New York. Sylvia would go on to become a professor at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine where she focuses on women's health issues.

Ola's parents, Mordechai and Esther Jonisch both perished during the war. They were deported to the Treblinka extermination camp. Mordechai died on the train and Esther was killed at the camp. Her sister Hilda was deported to the Majdanek concentration camp and survived, and her sister Sophie was deported to the Auschwitz concentration camp and also survived. The rest of her siblings survived the

war in hiding, but many members of her extended family perished. Both of Aleksander's sisters survived the Holocaust, as did his brother Sam.

Scope and content of collection

The collection documents the Holocaust era experiences of the Hafftko family of Częstochowa, Poland and the Jonisch family of Żarki, Poland. Included are photographs of Ola Hafftko (née Jonsich), her husband Aleksander Hafftko, and their daughter Sylvia Hafftko (now Sylvia Smoller), along with other family members. Also included are photographs of the *Hie Maru*, the ship that Ola, Aleksander, and Sylvia sailed on from Kobe, Japan to Seattle, Washington in 1941 after obtaining Japanese visas from Chiune Sugihara. Additionally, there is an identification card of Ola's from Warsaw, Poland.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as one series. Some photographs are copy prints.

Indexing terms

Person:

Smoller, Sylvia, 1932-

Hafftko, Aleksander, 1892-1964.

Hafftko, Ola.

Jonisch, Mordechai.

Jonisch, Esther.

Sugihara, Chiune, 1900-1986.

Topical Subject:

Emigration & immigration--United States--1940-1950.

Jewish families--Poland--Czestochowa.

Jewish families--Poland--Warsaw.

Poland--Politics and government--1918-1945.

Jewish refugees--Japan.

Geography:

Warsaw (Poland)

Częstochowa (Poland)

Żarki (Poland : Gmina)

Japan--Emigration and immigration.

Genre/Form:

Photographs.

CONTAINER LIST

Folder	Title
1	Dukat, Helena, 1952
2	Family and friends, 1936-1946
3	Hafftko, Aleksander, circa 1918-1940
4	Hafftko, Ella, circa 1930s
5	Hafftko family, 1938-1946

6	Hafftko, Jadwiga, circa 1930s
7	Hafftko, Ola: Identification card, 1935
8	Hafftko, Ola: 1919-1938
9	Hafftko, Sam, circa 1930s
10	Hafftko, Sylvia, 1939-1941
11	<i>Hie Maru</i> , 1941
12	Jonisch, David, 1948
13	Jonisch, Esther, circa 1930s
14	Jonisch family, circa 1930s-1946