

BÉLA INGBER FAMILY PAPERS, 1928-1963
2017.643.1

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

Title: Béla Ingber family papers

Dates: 1928-1963

Accession number: 2017.643.1

Creator: Ingber, Béla, 1913-2003.

Extent: .5 linear feet (1 box)

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

Abstract: The collection consists of correspondence and photographs documenting the Holocaust-era experiences of Béla Ingber, originally from Munkács, Hungary (now Mukacheve, Ukraine) as a forced-laborer in Hungary during World War II and as a Jewish refugee in Italy from 1945-1947. Correspondence includes postcards to Béla while he was a forced-laborer from his father Kálmán Ingber in Munkács, and post-war letters from his brothers Jóska, Miki, and Oli and his sister Libu. Photographs include depictions of pre-war family life, Béla and his brothers in the Czech Army, Béla as a forced-laborer in Hungary, and Béla and his wife Marika Leiner after the war in Italy. Also included are Béla's displaced persons identification papers and a personal narrative about his wartime experience.

Languages: Hungarian, 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), Béla Ingber family papers (2017.643.1), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Jeff Ingber in 2017.

Related materials: Jeff Ingber wrote about his father's story in his book *Béla's Letters* (PS3609.N4574 B45 2016)

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, May 2018

Biographical note

Béla Ingber (1913-2003) was born in Munkács, Hungary (later Czechoslovakia; now Mukacheve, Ukraine) to Kálmán Ingber (1882-1944, born in Kielce) and Eszter Mermelstein (1884-1944, born in Gdansk). He had seven siblings: Ilona (1905-1944), Jenő (Eugen, 1906-1942), Ferencz (b. 1908), Jóska (1910-1989), Adolph (Oli, 1915-1998), Miki (1922-1981), and Erzsébet (Libu, 1925-2012). Kálmán worked as a horse and cattle trader. He was religiously observant and the family's life centered on Jewish holidays and practice.

In November 1938, Germany gave Hungary control of part of Czechoslovakia, including Munkács. Soon Hungary instituted anti-Semitic restrictions limiting Jewish economic and educational opportunities. Béla and Ferencz were both conscripted into Hungarian Labor Companies (Munkaszogalat), auxiliary Jewish units to the Hungarian military. Bela had previously served in the Czech Army but, as a Jew, he could no longer be a soldier. Oli illegally immigrated to Palestine in 1939, and later joined the British Army. Jóska obtained a visa to come to the United States to attend the World's Fair in Flushing Meadow, New York in 1939. He remained in the U.S. after start of World War II and enlisted in the United States Army to both assist in the war effort and obtain citizenship to help his family emigrate from Europe. By sheer coincidence, he and Oli met each other in a movie theater in London shortly before D-Day.

Jenő moved to Prague where he worked as a journalist writing anonymous anti-Nazi editorials. After someone betrayed him, he was arrested and deported to the Mauthausen concentration camp. He was shot and killed on 1 October 1942 while trying to escape.

Following the invasion of the Soviet Union in 1941, conditions worsened for the forced-laborers, and their Hungarian supervisors grew increasingly sadistic. Ferencz's unit was sent to support Hungarian troops fighting in Russia, and he perished in unknown circumstances. The last letter the family received from him was dated October 1942.

Béla's parents, Ilona and her family, Miki, Libu, and Ferencz' wife and child were all deported from Munkács to the Auschwitz concentration camp in 1944. Everyone but Miki and Libu perished there. Libu was later deported to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. After the camp was liberated, Libu was taken to Sweden by the Red Cross to recover. She later immigrated to the United States. Miki was deported from Auschwitz to the Dachau concentration camp. He was left for dead among a pile of dead bodies after the camp was liberated but was rescued when someone heard him breathing.

Béla spent much of the war in Hungary in forced-labor battalions. He met Marika Leiner (b. 1925 in Budapest) through a mutual friend in Budapest in 1942 while he was trying to obtain warmer clothing. Marika's mother died from leukemia when she was a child and her father, a commercial painter, later married Roszi, a tailor. Her father was killed in an air raid toward the end of the war, and she survived in Budapest after receiving false-identity papers from her Christian friend in October 1944.

Béla was taken captive by the Romanian Army in Cluj in fall 1944. He served with them as a laborer until Hungary was liberated by the Red Army in early 1945. He reunited with Marika after Budapest was liberated. They married on 7 June 1945 in Munkács. He was also reunited with his brother Miki. In October 1945 Béla, Marika, and Miki fled communist Czechoslovakia and went to Italy. Miki immigrated to the United States in 1946. Béla and Marika's first child, Esther, was born in 1947 and in May 1947 they immigrated to the United States onboard the *Saturnia*. They settled in Queens, New York. Their son Jeffrey was born in 1954.

Scope and content of collection

The collection consists of correspondence and photographs documenting the Holocaust-era experiences of Béla Ingber, originally from Munkács, Hungary (now Mukacheve, Ukraine) as a forced-laborer in Hungary during World War II and as a Jewish refugee in Italy from 1945-1947. Correspondence includes postcards to Béla while he was a forced-laborer from his father Kálmán Ingber in Munkács, and post-war letters from his brothers Jóska, Miki, and Oli and his sister Libu. Photographs include depictions of pre-war family life, Béla and his brothers in the Czech Army, Béla as a forced-laborer in Hungary, and Béla and his wife Marika Leiner after the war in Italy. Also included are Béla's displaced persons identification papers and a personal narrative about his wartime experience.

System of arrangement

The collection is arranged as three series.

Series 1. Biographical material, 1947-1963 and undated

Series 2. Correspondence, 1943-1959 and undated

Series 3. Photographs, 1928-1956

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically.

Indexing terms

Person:

Ingber, Béla, 1913-2003.

Ingber, Miki.

Ingber, Oli.

Ingber, Jóska.

Ingber, Libu.

Ingber, Kálmán.

Mermelstein, Eszter.

Leiner, Marika.

Topical Subject:

Jews--Ukraine--Mukacheve.

Forced labor--Hungary.

Refugees, Jewish--Italy.

Holocaust, Jewish (1939-1945)--Personal narratives.

Geography:
Mukacheve (Ukraine)
Italy.

Genre/Form:
Photographs.
Correspondence.

CONTAINER LIST

Series 1. Biographical material, 1947-1963 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.1	Ingber, Béla, 1947-1963 and undated
1.2	Ingber, Esther(?), circa 1959

Series 2. Correspondence, 1943-1959 and undated

Box/Folder	Title
1.3	Ingber, Jóska, 1945-1947
1.4	Ingber, Kálmán, 1943
1.5	Ingber, Libu, 1945-1947
1.6	Ingber, Miki, 1946-1947 and undated
1.7	Ingber, Oli, 1947-1959
1.8	1950 and undated

Series 3. Photographs, 1928-1956

Box/Folder	Title
1.9	Ingber, Béla, 1934-circa 1950
1.10	Ingber, Béla and Marika, 1945-1956
1.11	Ingber family, 1928-1948
1.12	Leiner, Marika, circa 1928-1953
1.13	Leiner family, 1937