

## MARGOSIS FAMILY PAPERS, 1939-2015

### 2018.209.2

United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives  
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#### Descriptive summary

Title: Margosis family papers

Dates: 1939-2015

Accession number: 2018.209.2

Creator: Margosis (Family : Brussels, Belgium)

Extent: .3 linear feet (7 folders)

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

Abstract: The collection documents the Holocaust experiences of Isaac Margosis and his wife Schendel Brotman who fled Brussels, Belgium with their children Anna, Willy, and Michel in 1940. Included are letters to Isaac and Schendel, living as refugees in Caldas da Rainha, Portugal, from Anna and Willy in Barcelona, Spain (1944) and Palestine (1944-1948); correspondence and writings regarding Isaac's journalism career; identification papers including Schendel's Persian (Iran) passport and refugee IDs from Caldas da Rainha; correspondence related to family history; and restitution paperwork.

Languages: German, English, French

#### 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), Margosis family papers (2018.209.2), United States Holocaust Memorial Museum Archives, Washington, DC

Acquisition information: The collection was donated to the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum by Michel Margosis, son of Isaac Margosis, in 2018. An accretion was also donated in 2018. The collections previously numbered 2018.209.1 and 2018.524.1 have been incorporated into this collection.

Related archival materials: There are several oral history interviews conducted with Michel Margosis available at the USHMM.

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: Adam Fielding, May 2018. Revised in January 2019

**Biographical note**

Isaac Ben-Seef Margosis (1898-1953) was born in Odessa (Ukraine) on December 5, 1889 and studied under Hebrew poet Chaim Nachman Bialik. He married Schendel Brotman (b. 1902 in Odessa, later Jenny Margosis) in 1923. They had three children, Anna (b. 1924 in Hamadan, Iran), Willy (1925-1992 in Hamadan), and Michel (b. 1928 in Brussels). Isaac was an active Zionist and was arrested and banished to Siberia during the Bolshevik revolution. Isaac escaped to Iran where he gained citizenship. Schendel joined him in Iran and then they went to Palestine before returning to Europe and settling in Brussels, Belgium. In Brussels, Isaac edited and published two weekly papers, the Jewish "Yiddishe Voch" and the French "Notre Opinion."

Following the German invasion of Belgium on May 10, 1940, the Margosis family fled to Cazères sur Garonne, a small town in southern France. Isaac attempted to get visas in Marseilles and Vichy, but after these efforts failed, it was decided that Isaac should flee alone. As a journalist his life was most in danger since he had been publishing editorials denouncing fascism and despotism. Isaac escaped to Portugal, settled in Caldas da Rainha. Schendel and the children went to stay with friends (also Russian Jewish émigrés) on their farm in southern France through the winter of 1940. They then went to Marseilles and supported themselves by trading on the black market.

After the German occupation of southern France in 1942, Schendel decided that the family should leave as soon as possible. She purchased forged safe-conduct papers, which allowed them to go to a mountain resort in the Pyrenees, near the Spanish border. From there, Schendel paid two smugglers \$40,000 in American money to guide them through the snow and over the mountains and into Spain. Once in Spain, she hired a second guide to bring them to Barcelona. The Spanish Guardia Civil intercepted the family in Barcelona and confiscated their valuables. Schendel, Anna, and Willy were imprisoned, and Michel was taken to an orphanage. After a week or two, the family was liberated and taken to a hotel in a small spa town, Caldas de Malavella, subsidized by the Joint Distribution Committee (JDC). Willy was sent to a concentration camp in Miranda de Ebro, but after several weeks was freed and rejoined the rest of the family who had since been moved to Barcelona.

In 1943, Schendel learned that the JDC was sponsoring a transport of children from Lisbon to the United States and she signed up Michel for it since he was under sixteen. Michel stayed with his father in Lisbon for a week before he departed for the U.S. aboard the *Serpa Pinto* (the children on this convoy who left without their parents later became known as the One Thousand Children). Michel arrived in the United States on June 22, 1943 and went to live with relatives in Brooklyn. Schendel was smuggled into Portugal in 1944 and rejoined Isaac. Anna and Willy immigrated to Palestine on youth Aliya in 1944. Isaac and Schendel immigrated to the United States in 1946. Anna came in 1950 with a husband and baby, and

Willy immigrated in 1953. Michel later became a volunteer with the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

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

The collection documents the Holocaust experiences of Isaac Margosis and his wife Schendel Brotman who fled Brussels, Belgium with their children Anna, Willy, and Michel in 1940. Included are letters to Isaac and Schendel, living as refugees in Caldas da Rainha, Portugal, from Anna and Willy in Barcelona, Spain (1944) and Palestine (1944-1948); correspondence and writings regarding Isaac's journalism career; identification papers including Schendel's Persian (Iran) passport and refugee IDs from Caldas da Rainha; correspondence related to family history; and restitution paperwork.

#### **System of arrangement**

The collection is arranged as two series.

Series 1. Correspondence, 1944-1957

Series 2. Biographical material, 1939-2015

Folders are arranged alphabetically and documents are arranged chronologically.

#### **Indexing terms**

Person:

Margosis, Michel, 1928-

Margosis, Anna, 1924-

Margosis, Willy, 1925-1992.

Margosis, Isaac, 1889-

Brotman, Schendel.

Corporate:

Topical Subject:

Jews--Belgium--Brussels.

Refugees, Jewish--Portugal.

Jewish journalists.

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

Geography:

Caldas da Rainha (Portugal)

Barcelona (Spain)

Palestine.

Brussels (Belgium)

United States--Emigration and immigration.

Genre/Form:

Correspondence.

## **CONTAINER LIST**

**Series 1. Correspondence, 1944-1957**

| Folder | Title                           |
|--------|---------------------------------|
| 1 of 7 | Margosis, Anna, 1944-1948       |
| 2 of 7 | Margosis, Willy, 1944-1948      |
| 3 of 7 | Other correspondence, 1944-1957 |

**Series 2. Biographical material, 1939-2015**

| Folder | Title                                    |
|--------|--|
| 4 of 7 | Family history, 1968, 2012-2015, undated |
| 5 of 7 | Identification papers, 1940-1949         |
| 6 of 7 | Journalism career, 1939 and undated      |
| 7 of 7 | Restitution, 1962-1968, 1993             |