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Guide to the Edgar Kupfer-Koberwitz Dachau Diaries. 1942-1945



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Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.KOBERWITZ
Title	Kupfer-Koberwitz, Edgar. Dachau Diaries.
Date	1942-1945
Size	6 linear ft. (9 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.
Abstract	The Edgar Kupfer-Koberwitz Papers contain his original diary and other documents pertaining to his imprisonment at Dachau. The early volumes are practically illegible from water damage. A folder containing the issues of <i>Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte</i> in which the diary was published is also included.

Information on Use

Access

No restrictions.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Kupfer-Koberwitz, Edgar. Dachau Diaries, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

Edgar Kupfer was born in the town of Koberwitz, Germany on April 24, 1906. He received his education in various cities across that country, including Bonn, Regensburg and Stuttgart. When his parents were divorced he left school to support his mother and sister. He remained with them and worked various jobs in factories, stores and banks. Kupfer's parents were later reconciled, and in the aftermath of a disappointing love affair Kupfer left Germany for Italy in 1925. Between 1925 and 1940, he moved between Germany and Italy, working in many types of jobs, including for newspapers, travel bureaus, and as a model for a sculptor of monuments.

In 1940, Kupfer was taken into custody by German police as an enemy of the German state, presumably for his pacifist ideology. He was imprisoned in the Dachau concentration camp for the duration of World War II. By pretending to be simple-minded, Kupfer received a clerk's job in the camp's store room, which gave him the opportunity to clandestinely begin a diary. He recorded incidents of concentration camp life on tiny slips of paper. He hid the pages of his diary

from prison guards by concealing them among business papers. He later buried them, where some of the pages sustained water damage.

While at Dachau, Kupfer continued to practice the vegetarianism he had embraced years before, dividing his meat ration amongst fellow prisoners. In his diary, he explained his belief that humans' ability to cruelly deny the humanity of others stemmed from widespread brutality of humans towards animals. He explained, "I believe as long as man tortures and kills animals, he will torture and kill humans as well—and wars will be waged—for killing must be practiced and learned on a small scale. We should try to overcome our own small thoughtless cruelty, to avoid it, and to abolish it." During his regime, in an attack on pacifist organizations, Hitler banned all vegetarian organizations and arrested their leaders in German-occupied territories.

Despite nearly being consumed by typhus, Kupfer survived his imprisonment at Dachau and was among the more than 67,000 prisoners liberated by American forces on April 29, 1945. Kupfer expressed his gratitude at having evaded death in the camp: "The day is over, this April 29 1945. I will celebrate it for the rest of my life as my second birthday, as the day that gifted me life anew." Vowing to use his writings to publicize his experiences and views, Kupfer attained the assistance of Thomas Emmet of the Counter Intelligence Corps to save his manuscript from deterioration in its hiding place.

Kupfer took great pains to establish the genuineness of his manuscript. To demonstrate its authenticity, he unearthed it in the presence of Counter Intelligence Corps agents. Kupfer also created and circulated a questionnaire among former Dachau inmates, gathering statements about his behavior in camp and his general trustworthiness. The Dachau Diary was serialized in the journal *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* under the title "Als Haftling in Dachau." From his Dachau notes, Kupfer also wrote an essay on vegetarianism which was published in the book *Radical Vegetarianism*, written by Mark Mathew Braunstein in 1981.

Mr. Kupfer, a resident of Chicago in the postwar period, donated his diaries to the University of Chicago in April 1, 1954.

Scope Note

The Edgar Kupfer-Koberwitz Papers contain the original diaries and a few other documents pertaining to Kupfer's imprisonment at Dachau. Those include letters from the U.S. Army C.I.C. regarding Kupfer, survey responses from Kupfer's fellow Dachau inmates establishing his good character, a postcard with a photograph of Kupfer, and a photocopy of Kupfer's postwar identification card. The early journal volumes are nearly illegible from water damage. A folder containing the issues of *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* in which the diary was published and a typewritten copy of Kupfer's essay "Animals My Brethren" are also included.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

Subject Headings

- Kupfer-Koberwitz, Edgar, 1906-
- Dachau (Concentration camp)
- World War, 1939-1945-Prisoners and prisons, German
- Concentration camps-Germany
- Diaries

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Diary 1

Box 1

Folder 2

Diary 2

Box 1

Folder 3

Diary 3

Box 1

Folder 4

Diary 4

Box 1

Folder 5

Diary 5

Box 1

Folder 6

Diary 6

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Diary 47

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Folder 7

"Vorwort - Georvich an Lage Dachau"

Box 5

Folder 8

"Vorwort"

Box 5

Folder 9

"Das Ende"

Box 5

Folder 10

Bechefft Prazftt (Tuge) Dachau

Box 5

Folder 11

"Animals My Brethren," an essay by Kupfer

Box 5

Folder 12

Photocopy of Kupfer Identification Card, Issued 10 Nov. 1945

Box 5

Folder 13

Postcard with Photograph of Kupfer and dog

Box 5

Folder 14

Kupfer CIC Staff Pass, permitting him to enter and leave camp

Box 5

Folder 15

German Military Government Concentration Camp Inmate Questionnaire, completed by Kupfer

Box 5

Folder 16

Letter from CIC Establishing the Authenticity of the Kupfer Diaries, 29 Oct. 1945

Box 5

Folder 17

Letter from U.S. C.I.C. establishing that Kupfer had diaries in his possession and should use discretion in disclosing their existence.

Box 5

Folder 18

Piece of Paper reading "Reserved for CIC, 7th Army" and bearing illegible signature

Box 5

Folder 19

Piece of paper reading "Off Limits: Do Not Disturb or Remove Anything From This Room by Order of C.I.C. 7th Army, E. Baraty, Special Agent, C.I.C., Camp Dachau"

Box 6

Folder 1

A 33 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 6

Folder 2

A 2314-B 2408 Franzosisch

Box 6

Folder 3

B 34-182 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 6

Folder 4

C 183-D 251 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 6

Folder 5

C 2409-D 2535 (9 Juli 1904) Franzosisch

Box 6

Folder 6

E 252-F 343 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 6

Folder 7

E2536-G 2604 (9 Juli 1904) Franzosisch

Box 6

Folder 8

G 344-421, 835-88 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 6

Folder 9

Goethe 422-834

Box 6

Folder 10

H 889-1079 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 6

Folder 11

H 2605-L 2719 (9 Juli 1904) Franzosisch

Box 6

Folder 12

H 2605-L 2719 (9 Juli 1904) Französisch

Box 6

Folder 13

Italienisch 3095-3351 (30 Juni 1904)

Box 7

Folder 1

J 2042-2084 (26 Juli 1904)

Box 7

Folder 2

K 1121-1254 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 7

Folder 3

L 1255-1404 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 7

Folder 4

M 2714-2814 (9 Juli 1904) Französisch

Box 7

Folder 5

M 1405-1506 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 7

Folder 6

N 2815-O 2873 (9 Juli 1904) Französisch

Box 7

Folder 7

NO 1507-PQ 1597 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 7

Folder 8

R 2974-S 3005 (9 Juli 1904)

Box 7

Folder 9

R 1598-1658 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 7

Folder 10

S 1659-1698 -1895-2041 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 7

Folder 11

Schiller 1699-1874

Box 8

Folder 1

Spanisch 3352-3388 (29 Juni 1904)

Box 8

Folder 2

T 3006-W 3094 (9 Juli 1904)

Box 8

Folder 3

U 2085-V 2147 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 8

Folder 4

W 2148-Z 2313 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 8

Folder 5

Y 1080-1120 (26 Juni 1904)

Box 9

Folder 1

Anfang

Box 9

Folder 2

Kupfer - Gitachtue Meines Kameradin (Mehrere Spocken) Originale (These appear to be transcripts of interviews of Kupfer's fellow inmates at Dachau attesting to his character and actions while imprisoned there)

Box 9

Folder 3

Published Text: Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte