

# Guide to the Konrad Liberman Papers

MS 1423



compiled by Diane E. Kaplan and John Espy

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## Collection Overview

**REPOSITORY:** Manuscripts and Archives  
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**CALL NUMBER:** MS 1423

**CREATOR:** Liberman, Konrad, 1922-

**TITLE:** Konrad Liberman papers

**DATES:** 1939-1940

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:** 0.25 linear feet (1 box)

**LANGUAGE:** French

**SUMMARY:** The papers of Konrad Liberman, a French-Polish physician, linguist, and essayist, consist of three diaries which he kept while a student in Paris and which record the progress of World War II.

**ONLINE FINDING AID:** To cite or bookmark this finding aid, please use the following link: <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1423>

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## Requesting Instructions

To request items from this collection for use in the Manuscripts and Archives reading room, please use the request links in the HTML version of this finding aid, available at <https://hdl.handle.net/10079/fa/mssa.ms.1423>.

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Key to the container abbreviations used in the PDF finding aid:

b.      box  
f.      folder

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## Administrative Information

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### Immediate Source of Acquisition

Gift of Victor Erlich in 1971. The papers were originally in the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection, MS 352.

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## Conditions Governing Access

The materials are open for research.

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## Conditions Governing Use

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## Preferred Citation

Konrad Liberman Papers (MS 1423). Manuscripts and Archives, Yale University Library.

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## Biographical / Historical

Konrad Liberman, 1922-

Konrad Liberman was born in Warsaw, Poland on March 18, 1922. With his parents he moved to Paris in 1926, where he began his lycee studies. In 1940 he fled with his parents to Toulouse, where Liberman studied at l'Institut de Chimie Paul Sabatier and l'Ecole des Beaux-Arts de Toulouse until forced to flee to Spain in December, 1942. Liberman remained in Barcelona until 1946, studying painting at l'Institut Francois de Barcelone and working with his father in chemical research. When his family returned to Paris Liberman studied medicine. Liberman did research in the 1950s in microbiology and drug treatment for tuberculosis. In later research he undertook many studies of the pathological effects of tobacco and has written on the use of tobacco among American Indians. He has also published literary essays, some under the pseudonym Conrad Mahler. He married Gisèle Bouteiller in March, 1958.

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## Scope and Contents

Victor Erlich gave the diaries to the Yale Library in 1971. They were transferred from the Miscellaneous Manuscripts Collection in 1985. Further information about the Liberman Diaries:

The Lieberman diaries cover the period from July 15, 1939 to July 15, 1939 to July 13, 1940, a period, which involves the beginning and completion of German aggression against Czechoslovakia and Poland, the various political manoeuverings of Germany, England and Russia, the Finnish-Russian War, the Norwegian campaign, and the battles of the Netherlands and Flanders.

Lieberman, of Polish extraction, was living in Paris, studying for his baccalauréat, and is therefore able to provide us with a first-hand account of what it is like for a young person to have his life disrupted by cataclysmic world events over which he has no control. Since he was a teen-ager at the time, his diaries are of course filled with the sorts of things which concern all adolescents – parties with friends (among whom was Sophie Freud, grand-daughter of Sigmund), his school-work (one of his more notable philosophy professors was Gabriel Marcel) and his awareness of sexual awakenings. But more important for the historian and the general reader are his reports of the progress of the war.

In volume one (July 15 – November 1939), he reports the build-up of Nazi power around Poland and the mobilization of France, information which he gets largely by listening to the TSF. When the Germans actually do enter Poland, he and all the other French-Polish citizens are horrified, but France as a whole seems to avoid panic and remains calm. When England and France finally declare war on Germany, Lieberman's reaction is one of frustration that he is too young to enlist. Air-raid alerts become common in Paris – a black-out is put into effect – and everyone's sleep suffers as a result. By the time the Germans have destroyed Warsaw a Polish army is formed in France. Although too young to be called up, Lieberman,

in addition to his already heavy academic schedule, also undertakes preparatory military training after school.

Volume two (November 24, 1939 – May 4, 1940) deals largely with the sufferings of Polish friends and relatives. University professors are put into concentration camps. One of Lieberman's relatives manages to get to Budapest, and from there to Paris via Zagreb and Venice; another escapes to Italy. His grandfather and a maternal uncle die in Warsaw, and a friend is put to the firing squad. Lieberman also includes reports and comments on various battles and political machinations, such as the incident of the Graf Spee, the Franco-Polish accord, and the capitulation of Finland.

Volume three (May 5 – July 13, 1940) reports the invasion of the Netherlands and the bombardment and final capitulation of Belgium. Lieberman remarks that the Parisians are still managing to remain fairly calm and begin organizing to help the Belgian refugees pouring into the country. Lieberman involves himself with this effort, directing refugee "traffic" at the Gare de l'Est. When Germany and Italy start to attack France directly and it becomes obvious that General Weygand's heroic efforts are not going to be able to hold back the enemy, the Lieberman family finally leaves Paris and flees to the South of France, where Lieberman hopes to be able to finish his baccalauréat and where his father, still a Polish citizen, can get into contact with the Polish army unit into which he has been drafted.

The diaries end there, but Lieberman kept them over the years and from time to time annotated them, providing names and dates and occasional running marginal commentaries. Especially intriguing are the several canceled passages each accompanied by the annotation "effacésous Vichy."

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## Collection Contents

### Diaries

|            |          |                                |
|------------|----------|--------------------------------|
| b. 1, f. 1 | Volume 1 | 1939 July 15-<br>November 23   |
| b. 1, f. 2 | Volume 2 | 1939 November<br>24-1940 May 4 |
| b. 1, f. 3 | Volume 3 | 1940 May 5-July<br>13          |

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## **Selected Search Terms**

The following terms have been used to index the description of this collection in the Library's online catalog. They are grouped by name of person or organization, by subject or location, and by occupation and listed alphabetically therein.

### **Subjects**

World War, 1939-1945 -- Personal narratives,  
French

### **Genres / Formats**

Diaries

### **Names**

Liberman, Konrad, 1922-