Guide to the Haakon Maurice Chevalier Diary 1945/1946

Special Collections & University Archives

Overview of the Collection
Collection Title: Haakon Maurice Chevalier Diary
Dates: 1945-1946
Identification: MS-0403
Creator: Chevalier, Haakon Maurice, 1901-1985
Physical Description: 0.20 linear ft
Language of Materials: English,French,Czech
Repository: Special Collections & University Archives
5500 Campanile Dr. MC 8050
San Diego, CA, 92182-8050
URL: http://library.sdsu.edu/scua
Email: scref@rohan.sdsu.edu
Phone: 619-594-6791

Biographical Information:
Haakon Maurice Chevalier was a translator and professor of French at the University of California-Berkeley. After working as a translator for the French government at the first meeting of the United Nations in 1945, he was asked by the War Department to serve as interpreter at the Nuremberg Trials. He was later responsible (with Leon Dostert) for the introduction of simultaneous interpretation at the United Nations. Chevalier was friends with the atomic physicist Robert Oppenheimer; these relations led to his appearance before the House Subcommittee on Un-American Activities. He later authored a memoir of these events, entitled Oppenheimer: The Story of a Friendship.

Access Terms
This collection is indexed under the following controlled access subject terms.

Genre/Form of Material:
Personal Papers

Topical Term:
Nuremberg Trial of Major German War Criminals, Nuremberg, Germany, 1945-1946 -- Personal narratives
World War, 1939-1945 -- War Criminals

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Preferred Citation:
Identification of item, folder title, box number, Haakon Maurice Chevalier Diary, Special Collections and University Archives, Library and Information Access, San Diego State University.

Related Materials:
Hitler Memorabilia Collection

Arrangement of Materials:
Two notebooks and accompanying transcriptions in portfolio.

Scope and Contents

Haakon Chevalier's diary is comprised of two hand-written notebooks kept during his time working as a French-English translator at the Nuremberg war crimes trials in 1945 and 1946, and a partial transcript of the notebooks' English-language portions. The diaries begin on the first day of the trial, November 20, 1945, and end on March 17, 1946. His account includes vivid descriptions of trial participants (including facial expressions while testifying, unusual physical features, and personality traits), and personal interpretations of testimony. He mentions challenges to the court's competence, pleas entered by the defendants, Nazi treatment of Jewish peoples in occupied territories, the Anschluss, and myriad other topics, including individual cases against Goering, Ribbentrop, Streicher, and others. Descriptions of day and weekend trips Chevalier took to Paris and Prague during the course of the trial are also included, as well as doodles, notes he wrote to himself, addresses, and scores from card games.