Finding Aid of the Irmgard Lenel papers 0212

Finding aid prepared by Rebecca Hirsch
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USC Libraries Special Collections
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**Title:** Irmgard Lenel papers  
**Collection number:** 0212  
**Contributing Institution:** USC Libraries Special Collections  
**Language of Material:** English  
**Physical Description:** 12.17 Linear feet, 16 boxes  
**Date (inclusive):** 1912-1999  
**Language of Materials:** While most of the collection is in English, a significant portion of it is in German, including almost all of Lenel's correspondence, papers and photographs from before she moved to the United States in 1937. After emigrating, she began writing her correspondence and notes in English. However, some of her later correspondence, usually with her family, is also in German.  
**Abstract:** This collection contains the papers of Irmgard Lenel, who was born in Germany in 1901 and who immigrated to the United States in 1937. She was a politically active socialist involved with groups like Women for Legislative Action and the Friends Committee on Legislation. Her papers include correspondence, photographs, legal papers, and some periodical publications.  
**creator:** Lenel, Irmgard, 1901-2001  
**Preferred Citation**  
[Box/folder# or item name], Irmgard Lenel papers, Collection no. 0212, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California.  
**Biographical Note**  
Irmgard Lenel was born in Manheim, Germany, on July 1, 1901, to the manufacturer Richard Lenel and his wife, Emilie (nee Maas). Lenel was raised in Manheim, where she attended the Manheim School for Social Work, and after completing her training there she worked as a private secretary for Professor S.P. Altmann. After that, she spent a year attending The London School of Economics to improve her command of the English language. Upon her return to Germany in the mid-1920s, she spent three years as a magazine editor and then six working as a secretary for the publishing firm Ullstein Verlag.  
Lenel emigrated to the United States in 1937 and lived in New York City until 1941, when she moved to Santa Monica, California. While living in California, she held a number of secretarial and stenographer positions. She was naturalized in 1941, and worked at the Veterans Administration for six years. In 1947 she was let go on suspicion of disloyalty to the United States. She appealed her dismissal and was found to have been unjustly terminated. After her hearing, she became active in the defense of others charged with performing un-American activities. Lenel never married, and had no children. She passed away in Santa Monica in November 2001.  
**Scope and Content**  
This collection includes the personal and business correspondence, photographs, and personal papers of Irmgard Lenel from both her life in Germany and from after her immigration to the United States in 1938. In addition, the collection documents her prolific political activity (predominantly in the form of writing letters to politicians and other officials and Letters to the Editor) and her interest in a number of political movements, including the curtailment of civil liberties during the McCarthy era, and the civil rights, disarmament, and anti-war movements. Political groups Lenel was actively involved in include the Friends Committee on Legislation (FCL), Women for Legislative Action (WLA), and Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF). One of Lenel's good friends and correspondents was Dorothy Healey, the long-time head of the Communist Party in Los Angeles, and much of the collection reflects Lenel's socialist leanings.  
**Conditions Governing Use**  
The collection contains published materials; researchers are reminded of the copyright restrictions imposed by publishers on reusing their articles and parts of books. It is the responsibility of researchers to acquire permission from publishers when reusing such materials. The copyright to unpublished materials belongs to the heirs of the writers. Permission to publish, quote, or reproduce must be secured from the repository and the copyright holder.  
**Conditions Governing Access**  
COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. Advance notice required for access.  
**Subjects and Indexing Terms**  
Friends Committee on National Legislation (U.S.). -- Archives  
Healey, Dorothy, 1914-2006 -- Archives  
Lenel, Irmgard, 1901-2001 -- Archives  
Women for Legislative Action. -- Archives
Anti-communist movements--United States--History--20th century--Archival resources
Correspondence
Exiles--Germany--History--20th century--Archival resources
Germany--Emigration and immigration--History--1933-1945--Archival resources
Germany--Social life and customs--20th century--Archival resources
Legal instruments
Photographs
Political participation--United States--Archival resources
Publications
Secretaries--California--Los Angeles--Archival resources
Socialists--California--Los Angeles--Archival resources
Socialists--United States--Archival resources
United States--Politics and government--20th century--Archival resources
Women political activists--California--Los Angeles--Archival resources

Personal Papers
Scope and Content
Series contains the personal papers, legal documents, correspondence, and photographs of Irmgard Lenel. Her personal correspondents included Dorothy Healey, Helmut Cron, and the various parties involved with getting various members of her family visas to immigrate to the United States in the late 1930s and 1940s. Lenel's personal papers consists of notebooks with recipes, poems and other writings, legal documents (including passports and a copy of her birth certificate) from Nazi Germany, receipts and other financial records, and her school papers and references. Photographs present in this series are primarily of Lenel with family members in various German locations in the 1920s and 1930s, although photographs of Santa Monica and Lenel's siblings and their families in England and Larchmont, New York, are also present.

Box 1
Legal Documents

Box 1-3
Correspondence

Box 3
Financial Records

Box 3
Papers

Box 3-5
Photographs

Box 5
Autograph Book 1913-1919
Box 5

**Employment Correspondence & Records**

**Scope and Content**

Series contains correspondence pertaining to Lenel's employment (usually as a secretary or stenographer), both in Germany in the 1930s and after she moved to the United States in 1937. Also included in this series are her personnel records from various employers and the correspondence between Lenel, her lawyer and the Veterans Administration pertaining to her firing due to suspected disloyalty to the United States in 1951.

**Correspondence with Governments**

**Scope and Content**

Series contains Lenel's correspondence with agencies, departments, and representatives of federal, state, and local governments on a variety of policy and political issues. She wrote letters to the President, Senators and Representatives (both of California and other states), the Department of State, and various state and local government officials. Copies of her outgoing correspondence are often found with the response she received (usually from a staffer of whatever office she wrote to, not the actual official). Also included in this series is campaign literature she received in the mail.

Box 5-6

**Federal**

Box 6

**State and Local**

Box 6

**Political Campaigns**

Box 7

**Correspondence with Radio & TV Stations**

**Scope and Content**

Series contains Lenel's correspondence (both incoming and outgoing) with a variety of radio and TV commentators and subscription solicitations from public radio and TV stations. Lenel was an active supporter of a number of radio and television stations, including KPFK, KUSC and KCET and this series includes a reel recording of her 1964 "Subscriber's Report" broadcast with Robert Adler for KPFK. Also included in this series is correspondence documenting her support of the World Peace Broadcasting Foundation.

Box 7-10

**Correspondence with Political Groups**

**Scope and Content**

Series contains correspondence documenting Lenel's involvement with politically active organizations, including the Friends Committee on Legislation (FCL), Women for Legislative Action (WLA), and the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF).

**Subject Files, Publications & Newspaper Clippings**

**Scope and Content**

Series contains subject files and publications on various topics Lenel followed, including civil liberties curtailment (especially McCarthyism), the civil rights movement, the disarmament, and anti-war movements. Clippings contained in this series are from both English and German newspapers. While the English clippings are generally about Lenel's interests (outlined above), the German ones are mostly from socialist and/or women's publications from before World War II.

Box 10-12

**Subject Files**