Bardacke, Gregory; Papers

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M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives
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Summary Information

Repository: M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives
Title: Gregory Bardacke Papers
ID: apap405
Date [inclusive]: 1937-1938
Physical Description: .2 cubic ft.
Physical Location: The materials are located onsite in the department.
Language of the Material: English
Abstract: This collection contains material related to Gregory Bardacke’s work as a labor organizer for the International Ladies’ Garment Worker’s Union (ILGWU) and about the Derby Sportswear factory strike which began in August 1937 in Herkimer, New York.

Preferred Citation

Preferred citation for this material is as follows:

Identification of specific item, series, box, folder, Gregory Bardacke Papers, 1937-1938. M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives, University Libraries, University at Albany, State University of New York (hereafter referred to as the Bardacke Papers).

Biographical Note

Gregory Joseph Bardacke was born in 1912 in Harbin, China, the second child of Joseph and Anya Bardacke. His parents, both Jewish, were Russian speakers from Ukraine and Lithuania respectively, and Bardacke spoke only Russian until he attended school in Canada (where the family had moved when he was about a year old) at age five. The family immigrated to the United States in 1921. Bardacke graduated from high school in New Jersey and attended Syracuse University on a football scholarship (though he only played for Syracuse for one year, choosing to play semi-pro as he needed the money for rent and food). Thus, although he earned a degree (in Chemistry), he was not actually awarded the degree as the University claimed he owed money for tuition.
Bardacke began working as an organizer for the International Ladies' Garment Worker's Union (ILGWU) in early 1937 in Herkimer, New York hoping to organize the employees of the Derby Sportswear factory to form a union. In August 1937, some employees at the factory went on strike. During the strike, Bardacke was arrested and indicted several times for defending the young female workers, but he was never convicted. After leaving the ILGWU, Bardacke worked for the Hatters Union in Connecticut.

In January 1939, Bardacke married Beatrice Schonberg, another labor organizer. Although both he and his wife had earlier been members of the Socialist Party, when Hitler invaded Poland, they quickly joined the Democratic Party and Bardacke raised money from workers in labor unions for the Party. The two remained committed Democrats their entire lives. Before World War II ended, Bardacke took a job with the War Production Board in Washington D.C., working with labor unions to support the war effort. He then worked at Dymaxion Dwelling Machines, Inc. Bardacke next worked with R. Buckminster Fuller at Dymaxion Dwelling Machines, Inc. (later renamed Fuller Houses, Inc.) and then the Lustron Corporation. Both companies sought to build pre-fabricated homes, given the post-war demand for housing.

In 1947, Bardacke was appointed the labor representative to the United Nations Appeal for Children (later UNICEF). In 1953, he began working as the Executive Director of the Histadrut, the Israeli Labor Federation, out of its New York office. Bardacke worked there, connecting the leadership of American labor unions with their counterparts in Israel, for the rest of his working career.

Bardacke died in 1991, survived by three daughters.
Administrative Information

Publication Statement

M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections & Archives

Processing Information

The collection was processed by Dulcie Beauregard in 2023.

Access

Access to this collection is unrestricted.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

All items in this collection were donated by Ann Bardacke, daughter of Gregory Bardacke, in 2023 and 2024.

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Controlled Access Headings

- Bardacke, Gregory, 1912-1991
- I.L.G.W.U. (International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union)
- Strikes and lockouts--New York (State)
- Herkimer (N.Y.)
- Labor
- Labor union meetings
- News Clippings

Collection Inventory

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