

Gedenkstätte der Sozialisten in Berlin-Friedrichsfelde

Ruhn und Eln-e den unsterblichen Kampfem für den Sozialismus

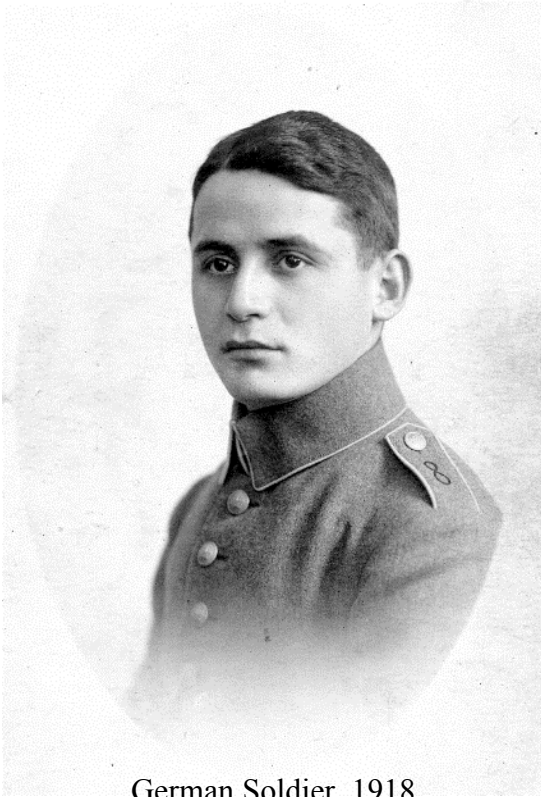
Gustav Hartog



GÖRITZ · SEPP GÖTZ
T GRUBE · WILHELM
H · ALBERT HAHNEL
R · RUDOLF HARLASS
IG · GUSTAV HARTOG
EILBUT · ERNST HEIL-
· AUGUST HENNING
F HILFERDING · ELSE
A HOFACKER · ARTHUR

A Biography
by
Curt Hartog

Gustav Hartog



German Soldier, 1918

Gustav Hartog (December 23, 1897-1944), the third of five sons, was born in Aachen to Albert and Eva Hartog (née Holländer). He was named for his maternal uncle, Gustav Holländer. Albert's first four children, Goldine (Golda, 1889-1941), Emil (1890-1943), Martha (Marta, 1892-1995), and Eugen (1893-1916) were born to Eva's older sister Johanna Holländer (1862-1894). After Johanna's death, Eva moved into the home to take care of the children. She and Albert were married in 1895. Together they had another seven children: Selma (1895-1978), Gustav, Meta (1898-1968), Bert (1901-1997), Curth (1902-1988), and the twins Ewalda (1904-1984) and Johanna (1904-1988). The family lived in the Hindenburgstraße 49, which today is the Theaterstraße.¹

Little is known of Gustav's early family life, although from later photos it would seem that Gustav was quite close to his older sister Selma and his younger sister Meta. By 1917 he was old enough to enter military service



Meta, Gustav, Selma (L-R)

like his older half-brothers. Emil had been drafted in the Navy (1911) and Eugen had enlisted in the Army, serving in the Ardennes until he contracted a fatal illness and died in 1916. Perhaps because of his slight build—he stood about 1.57 m and weighed about 55-59 kg—Gustav served in the supply command, bringing ammunition to the front.

Eugen's death had already cast a pall over the entire Hartog family when Gustav was drafted and it did not lift after the Armistice in November of 1918. Gustav returned to Aachen but soon left, spurred by his mother's fears that the occupying Belgian forces would deal harshly with German soldiers.

¹ Please see Golda and Emil Hartog's biographies in the *Gedenkbuch 2011*.

He found work in Hannover through the good offices of an uncle. Eva's fears of retribution against former soldiers did not materialize, however, and Gustav returned to Aachen where he managed a bookstore. It was probably during this period in the early twenties that Gustav, like Golda, Selma, and Johanna, became involved with the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD) in opposition to the nascent Nazi movement and its overt anti-Semitism. A photo of a carefree Gustav with a friend at a 1929 Aachen Künstlerfest (Artists' Festival) suggests that his life was not all work.





A subsequent photo (August 21, 1932) depicts Gustav and his sister Meta smiling, bemused, at an unidentified girl on a walking path in Offenbach. The three stand before an unidentified young woman whose face is obscured; the girl looks down thoughtfully at the young woman's shoe, as if pondering a question. Gustav, now thirty-five years old and balding, looks middle-aged. He is no longer the young Künstlerfest celebrant of 1929.

The peaceful, almost pastoral scene gives no hint of the storm that would break in January 1933, with Hitler's appointment as Chancellor. In her diary, Eva Hartog noted that her son Gustav was arrested in January, 1933.

He was imprisoned in Gollnow Camp in Stettin, today Szczecin in Poland, close to the German border. Gustav and another prisoner, Hans Geffke, "published" a handwritten paper entitled "Fanal Organ der proletarischen

Schutzhaftgefangenen in Gollnow" (dated April, 1933).²

² "The two hand-written copies of the text were forwarded from cell to cell during the prisoners' free periods. In the paper, Hans Geffke reported that the struggle against fascism continued. Geffke and Hartog gave specific instructions on how to behave in solitary confinement" (Wolfgang Benz, Barbara Distel editors, in *Localization of terror history of nationalist camps*, Vol 2, Vg CH Beck, Munich 2005, page 103). "An inmate recalled that the magazine showed others that even in the worst and most difficult conditions, they should not hang their heads . . . [But] a copy of the paper fell into the wrong hands. The Director of Gollnow then directed that all newspapers and books be removed and prohibited circulation of texts and inmate visits. Geffke, who enlisted as a writer in order to avert further reprisals, was placed under strict arrest." (Klaus Drobisch, Günter Wieland, *System der*

Because the Gollnow camp was overcrowded, Gustav may have been taken with his friend Hans Geffke and other prisoners to KZ Sonnenburg around May 1933. KZ Sonnenburg, which existed between 3 April 1933 and 23 April 1934 (Wolfgang Benz und Barbara Distel, *Der Ort des Terrors*, 2005, page 200), was located close to Küstrin, now Kostrzyn in Poland, about 90 kilometers east of Berlin on the German-Polish border.



Gustav, c. 1917, perhaps mounted for supply role

After he was released, Gustav returned briefly to Aachen around June 1934. But it had become too dangerous to remain in Germany. In her diary, Eva Hartog noted that Gustav made his way to Holland and then to Switzerland in 1935. The Swiss Archives documents his expulsion from Switzerland as a foreigner in 1936. According to the “Schweizerisches Departement des Internen, Schweizerisches Bundesarchiv” (Swiss Department of the Interior, Swiss Federal Archives), the Swiss Government expelled Gustav Hartog because he entered Switzerland illegally, stayed in Zürich without officially registering, and acted as a communist secret agent by producing a communist newspaper and smuggling illegal literature abroad.³

At this point, Gustav must have felt that he was a man without a country. Finding no refuge in neutral Switzerland, few options would have remained to him.

NS-Konzentrationslager 1933-1939, Akademie Verlag, Berlin 1993, page 152).

³ <http://www.swiss-archives.ch/detail.aspx?ID=1673610>. Quote from the minutes of the meeting of the Swiss Federal Council, 21 August 1936.

The European nations, the United States, and most South American countries had placed severe restrictions on immigration, especially of Jews suspected of communist affiliation.



Emil (l) and Gustav (r), undated

In any case, Gustav decided to join the International Brigades and made his way to Spain. I have not been able to determine exactly how and when he arrived to join many fellow German Jews. His story is not unique. Arno Lustiger conservatively estimates that at least 6,000 German and Austrian Jews joined the brigades to fight against Franco's Nationalist forces. According to Lustiger, "It was only outside Germany in Spain, that Jewish anti-Nazi activists experienced the real companionship and solidarity of comrades-in-arms united in fighting fascism."⁴

Many of the volunteers left little record of their service. Fortunately, Gustav kept a diary of which two handwritten fragments survive in the German Federal

Archives.⁵ Both cover the Spring of 1938, when

Gustav's Hans Beimler Battalion of the 11th Brigade sought to reorganize itself following the retreat from Teruel and the Nationalist's Aragon offensive that followed.

In the March document which he entitled "Spanish Odyssey," Gustav —although not identified in this first diary fragment by his military rank of *Sergeant-Major*—conveys vividly the confusion and fear of a small unit that

⁴ Arno Lustiger: German and Austrian Jews in the International Brigades, *Leo Baeck Institute Yearbook*, XXXV, London 1990, page 298.

⁵ The Federal Archives, Foundation Archives of Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archives: "Report Gustav v. Hartog (Executive Office) I. Company: "Spanish Odyssey", 31 March 1938 street Azaila-Quinto, retreat towards Hajar-road squadron, Caspe-Fraya-Corbera to unity. "(BArch SgY11/V237/4/97 signature) and" Report Gustav v. Hartog, for The History of the XI. Int. Brig sargento-mayor b. Hans Beimler Battalion. d XI. Brigade after the heavy withdrawals March / April 1938. "(Signature Sg11/V237/4/99 BArch) (<http://startext.netbuild.en:8080/barch/Midosasearch/sgy11/index.htm?kid=655f59fa-b749-451d-9dde2e301414a2e1>).

has lost contact with its company and battalion and must grope blindly to regain its lines. The movement of Gustav's squad, sometimes on foot, sometimes in trucks, generally follows the Ebro River south of Saragosa to the west and Lerida to the east. But when it is blocked and turned back by an Anarchist road block, it is forced to zigzag erratically as it undergoes attacks by Nationalist airplanes, tanks, and troops. Eventually the squad reaches the same Anarchist road block but this time continues on without being stopped. Next the squad transports a group of refugees north to Fraga, then doubles back to Alcaniz and learns that part of the Brigade staff has stopped in Corbera d'Ebre, about 85 km south of Lerida. Gustav concludes, "Our odyssey is over, we have no idea that a new day begins."

In the second, longer fragment, entitled simply "Retreats March /April 1938," the fog of war has been replaced by the frustration of endless, mindless reorganization, boredom, recalcitrant comrades, and so on. Gustav, who is "commissioned" to plan and document the constantly changing orders in his role of *Sargente-Mayor*, often describes the battalion's activities with an ironic tone. Every problem, from lack of communication to lack of food to lack of transportation seems to land on his desk. The officers he respects are those who rise above red tape and pettiness:

MIGUEL, as he was always only called (and he also signed all the documents only with his first name) was earlier Chief of the 1st Oficina of the brigade. He knew the "Effektivwesen" very well. ("Effekten" are the clothes and personal belongings of the soldiers that they had to hand in when joining the military service. They were kept in an "Effektenkammer", a room where the Effekten were kept, and were kept there until the end of the military service. So the "Effektivwesen" is everything to do with the "Effekten".) That was a relief for me. It did not require great explanations on presentation of reports and lists. A glance sufficed and Miguel knew what he signed (Bericht von Gustav Hartog zur Geschichte der XI. Internationalen Brigade, März/April 1938, p. 3; translated by Corinna Broeckmann).

The commanding officers—competent and incompetent alike—come and go. Tedium, however, remains constant. When the battalion

command issues a new *Plantilla* (Executive Order), Gustav has to expand the battalion's table of organization from three infantry companies to four. No sooner does he finish the painstaking work than he is ordered to redo it and condense it again to three infantry companies. He complies, of course, but remarks that the revised *Plantilla* now suffers an



Gustav and Selma, 1920s

Unzulänglichkeit or shortcoming because it

lacks a political component. Against this backdrop of military and political bureaucratic maneuvering, Gustav's



Emil (l) and Gustav (r), 1917

comments convey through tone and juxtaposition the triviality, frustration, and waste characteristic of the military.

On May 1 the battalion took up a position along a line from Vinebro to Flix near the Ebre River (the section of the Ebro that flows south to the Ebre Delta on the Mediterranean), but saw no action. The Sarge-Major was kept busy compiling and recompiling lists of men because of the slow pace of reorganization. In late May the battalion moved to Falset, about 14 Km

east of Vinebre and the Ebre. While the long rest period helped to restore the troops, the lack of action brought grumbling, ennui, and complaints about the food. The diary fragment ends with Gustav's comment that in late July 1938, the Hans Beimler battalion would move into action, becoming the first battalion of the 11th Brigade to cross the Ebro River.

Later that year, the Republican forces were decisively beaten and began their long retreat from the Ebro. Like many volunteers, Gustav probably made his way to Barcelona, the last Republican stronghold to fall before Madrid itself, then continued north through the Pyrenees to France. Eva Hartog records that he was taken by the French and placed in the camp at Vernet, probably in early 1939. The Vernet Internment Camp, or Camp Vernet, was located in Le Vernet, Ariège, near Pamiers, in the French Pyrenees. After France fell in June 1940, the Vichy government complied with Nazi requests to turn over Jewish prisoners to the Gestapo.⁶

⁶ http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Camp_Vernet.



Gustav Hartog, *Spanienkämpfer*

Gustav's fate was sealed. Like other Jewish detainees, he was sent to the Drancy transit camp near Paris.⁷ He arrived at Auschwitz on 14 August 1942. His sister Johanna wrote in her private journal that Gustav died in the camp in 1944.⁸ A memorial plaque, shown at the beginning of this biography, remains at the Gedenkstätte der Sozialisten in Berlin-Friedrichsfelde, and honors Gustav Hartog as one of "327 women and men of all generations without distinction between political, ideological and social affiliation who lost their lives in the anti-fascist resistance 1933-45."⁹

As Gustav's biographer, I have often wished to discover more of his personal correspondence. Did he fall in love? Did he in fact marry? One can only speculate. What I *know* is that Gustav was a fighter. He fought in the First World War for his fatherland. After the war, when German fascists began attacking Jews, he fought back as a pamphleteer. Arrested and imprisoned when Hitler came to power, then released, he fled to Switzerland and continued to write, agitate and organize against fascism. When the Swiss government expelled him,

⁷Gustav's deportation from Drancy is documented in the Mémorial de la Shoah archive: <http://bdi.memorialdelashoah.org/internet/jsp/core/MmsRedirector.jsp?id=20471&type=VICTIM>.

⁸ Johanna Manhart, private journal, courtesy of Eugen and Monika Manhart.

⁹ See the Gedenkbuchprojekt für die Opfer der Shoah aus Aachen e.V. J

Gustav, no longer a young man, joined the fight in Spain against Franco and his fascist allies, Hitler and Mussolini. Like his brothers and sisters who emigrated to the Soviet Union, he chose to fight against the genocide that Hitler had unleashed upon Jews of all countries. He paid for his principles with his life. Among the Hartog family of my generation and our children, his courageous sacrifice will not be forgotten.

Curt H. Hartog

St. Louis, July-November, 2012



Hartog Family 1914

Back Row, L-R: Meta, Selma, Eugen, Martha, Gustav

Middle Row: Emil, Eva, Albert, Golda

Front Row: Bert, Johanna, Ewalda, Curt

Acknowledgement and Sources

This biography would not have been possible without the continuing support of my sister Catherine Brierly and of my cousin Eugen Manhart and his wife, Monika.¹⁰ All of the photos and the information contained in the diaries of Eva Hartog and her daughter Johanna were supplied by Eugen and Monika, with the exception of the Hartog family photo. I thank them, again. Stefan Kahlen of the *Familienbuch Euregio* website provided invaluable help locating genealogical records and Corinna Broeckmann of the *Gedenkbuchprojekt* (Aachen) gave meticulous help with translation and research. Without Stefan's unflagging energy and Corinna's deft guidance, this biography would not have been possible.

Information not specifically cited has been drawn from material supplied from an unpublished interview of Bert Hartog that my sister and I conducted in November 1983. In that interview, Bert states that Gustav was married once, to a Gentile. Bert's memory at age 82 was very sharp but not perfect; I have found no public or private record of Gustav's having married.

¹⁰ Monika holds the stick pointing to Gustav's name in the Frontispiece, top photo, .

Appendix

Fragment of Eva Hartog's Diary, courtesy of Eugen and Monika Manhart.

Das nun vierzehnte Lebensjahr überlebte ich die
Elementarstufe. Nach deren Absolvierung
kam ich in eine dreijährige Laufbahn in
Lehre. Im Anschluss daran conditionierte
ich als Verkäuferin bis zur meiner Ver-
heiratung mit Albin Hartig, Witwen von
meiner Schwester, die im Alter von 31 Jahren
starb. Sie hinterließ vier Kinder die
ich an Mutterstatt betreute. Ich selbst
gebar 7 Kinder, so hatte ich elf Kinder
groß zu ziehen. Als die Höllezeit heran-
nahte vertrieben sich die Kinder ^{in die Straßen} ~~in die Straßen~~
was nur Folge hatte, dass wir sehr
verfolgt wurden. Geschäftswegnahmen
Haus ^{aus} ~~aus~~ ^{und} ~~und~~ ^{Verhörungen}. Nachdem
die Kinder teils ins Ausland geflüchtet
waren, teils sich in Hände verstreut
hielten & mein Mann inzwischen
gestorben war, wurde ich sehr be-
drängt, indem man weitere Haussuche
brüll & von mir wissen wollte
wo meine Kinder waren oder seien.
& Es war die Zeit als die Synagogen
verbrannt wurden, die Männer in
die Lager kamen. Ich fühlte mich
sehr bedrückt & veranlasste meinen
einen meiner Söhne mit ein Arsch
mit für Amerika zu besorgen

Appendix

Transcription and translation of Eva Hartog's diary fragment by Carmen Freeman, St. Louis, Missouri.

... Until the age of fourteen, I attended the Jewish Elementary School there. After I had graduated, I came to an administrative apprenticeship for three years. Following that I was employed as a sales person [in a store], until my marriage with Albert Hartog. [Albert Hartog] was widower of my sister, who died at 31 years of age. She left four children, whom I looked after. I, myself, gave birth to seven children. Therefore I had to bring up eleven children.

When the Hitler time approached, the children resisted against [it] _____. As a consequence we were persecuted. [The]business (?) was taken away, house searches (?) , and threats.

After some of the children had fled to foreign countries, and others were hiding themselves within the country, and my husband had died in the meantime, I was under a lot of pressure, [they] conducted more house searches (?) and I was questioned where my children were. It was the time when the synagogues were burned and the men went into the camps. I felt very threatened and asked one of my sons to get me an affidavit [sponsor] for America.

~~Bis~~ Zum vierzehnten Lebensjahr ~~besuchte~~ ich die Jüdische Elementarschule dortselbst. Nach deren Absolvierung kam ich in eine dreijährige kaufmännische Lehre. Im Anschluss daran conditionierte ich als Verkäuferin. Bis zu meiner Verheiratung mit Albert Hartog. Witwer von meiner Schwester, die im Alter von 31 Jahren starb. Sie hinterließ vier Kinder, die ich an Mutterstatt betreute. Ich selbst gebär 7 Kinder, so hatte ich elf Kinder groß zu ziehen. Als die Hitlerzeit herannahte wehrten sich die Kinder ~~dagegen~~ gegen den _Spohn (?) [Spuk]_. Was zur Folge hatte, dass wir sehr verfolgt wurden. Geschäfts (?) wegnahm, Haussuchungen (?) und Drohungen. Nachdem die Kinder teils ins Ausland geflüchtet, teils sich im Lande versteckt hielten und mein Mann inzwischen gestorben war, wurde ich sehr bedrängt indem man weitere Haussuchung (?) hielt & von mir wissen wollte wo meine Kinder waren oder ~~seien~~. Es war die Zeit als die Synagogen verbrannt wurden, die Männer in die Läger kamen. Ich fühlte mich sehr bedroht & veranlahste ~~meinen~~ einen meiner Söhne mir ein Avidavit für Amerika zu besorgen.

Please note:

- (?) Indicates that the word preceding was not clearly legible. Thus, the deciphering may be incorrect.
- ___ Indicates that letter(s) or word(s) were not legible.
- ... Indicates that letter(s) or word(s) are missing due to apparent copy problems.
- [] Brackets indicate further explanation or comments by this translator.