

# Meyer Family

By Almut Rüllmann, M.A.

Arthur Meyer, b. 1874 in Trebur, killed 1943 in Auschwitz

Helene Meyer, née Cohen, b. 1879 in Bonn-Endenich, killed 1943 in Auschwitz

Hans Martin Meyer, b. 1913 in Kotaradja, d. 1984 in Amsterdam, buried in Ra'anana, Israel

Herbert Meyer, b. 1916 in Bandung, d. 18.07.1973 in Den Haag

Ernst-Ludwig Hugo Meyer, b. 1917 in Surakarta, killed 1943 in Sobibor

From 1920 Arthur Meyer, an officer in the Dutch forces, was on the lookout for a permanent home in Germany for his family. He was approaching retirement. Eventually, from 1922 to 1934, a villa in Heppenheim's Hoehnschen estate, a prestigious residential area, was to become the family home for himself, his wife Helene and sons Hans Martin, Herbert and Ernst-Ludwig Hugo back in his old home state.

Arthur Meyer was born in 1874 in Trebur, the son of a Jewish businessman and livestock trader. Sometime in 1894–5 he volunteered to join the 88th Infantry Regiment (Nassauisch) in Mainz. Shortly after that he left for unknown reasons to join the KNIL (Koninklijk Nederlandsch-Indisch Leger) in January 1897. This unit was responsible for governing the Dutch-Indian Colony (Indonesia today). In order to do this, it was necessary to apply for emigration from the Hesse state federation. As a German Jew in a Dutch unit he was able to take up a military career and ended it in the rank of Staff Sergeant (sub lieutenant).

As he had already passed 30 years of age, when on leave in Germany in 1909 he went in search of a wife – at least according to the wedding poem – and in furtherance of this found himself in Essen. Here he met his future wife Helene Cohen, who was born in 1879 in Bonn-Endenich. She lived and worked in a shop in Mülheim on the Ruhr and the couple married soon after in 1910 in Siegburg, by Helene's relations. Already in April of that year the newly-weds left Europe and returned to Indonesia, where their three sons were born in various regions of the small island state, in 1913, 1916, and 1917.

Eventually they returned to Germany in 1920, stayed a short time in Weinheim, and finally they acquired the grand house at Ernst-Ludwig-Strasse 2 on 19th April 1922. Helene lived there initially alone with her three sons, as Arthur still needed to complete his remaining service as a Quartermaster and Staff Administrator (probably at the military hospital) in Indonesia. After his military retirement in 1923, Arthur joined the family in Heppenheim.

After a while, the Meyer family employed a servant, a young girl by the name of Hilde Sprang. They also applied for Hessian citizenship, which was granted in November 1926. They were receiving a pension, but to finance the sons' further education and the upkeep of the house, they needed also to work.

The sons attended the local schools (Volksschule, Oberrealschule) and Hans Martin joined various societies, e.g., the gymnastics club and first aid. He completed his business training between 1930 and 1933 with a Jewish-run firm in Mannheim.

The Meyer family were in very close contact with the family of Ludwig Metzger, the later Mayor of Darmstadt, as they were close neighbours in the Hoehnschen estate and because he had previously been Court and Parliament Assessor in Heppenheim. Arthur Meyer doesn't appear to have been particularly prominent in his new hometown, although he

did stand for election to the committee of the Jewish community, but lived with his family a rather quiet existence.

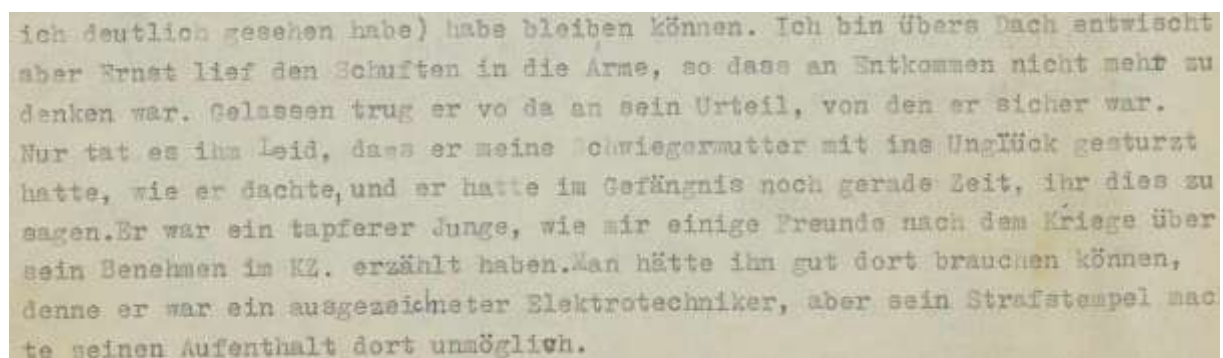
The introvert Heppenheim lives of the Meyers, a Jewish officer's family with a Dutch colonial past, changed suddenly and dramatically with the rise to power of the National Socialists in January 1933, and particularly in March 1933 when Arthur was apprehended in the middle of the market square by SA men. He was accused of military collaboration with the USSR and of being a "communist sympathizer" and treasurer of the local Communist Party. The accusations couldn't be proved, but the shock of getting arrested by the new rulers and further reprisals by official bodies and the bank, and not least of the successful process to remove him from the Hessian state federation in the summer of 1933 forced Arthur Meyer to sell his house at Ernst-Ludwig-Strasse 2 (very likely well under its true value). Even today it hasn't been clarified beyond doubt who was the next owner of the villa.

Hans Martin, the first-born son, left Germany for Den Haag already in 1933. Arthur, Helene, and Ernst-Ludwig Hugo followed him practically destitute in February 1934. And finally Herbert in April 1934 as soon as he had completed his schooling. (To this end he lived for a short time with Markus Hirsch). As the whole family spoke Dutch, and Arthur was receiving his pension from there, it was an obvious destination to flee to. They were in safety until, in 1940, the German Reich overran the Benelux countries in the so-called Blitzkrieg.

The family dispersed to Putten, Otterloo, and Den Haag because of the new anti-jewish regulations of the new occupiers; in Putten Arthur and Helene moved residence frequently until they were finally interned at Westerbork. In February 1943 they were both moved to Auschwitz and murdered there.

Ernst-Ludwig Hugo, the youngest son, fled in April 1943 to his brothers in Den Haag, where they had found refuge with Herbert's mother-in-law. Here he was arrested on May 13th 1943 in a raid. He was taken to Westerbork, then deported to the concentration camp at Sobibor where he died on May 21st.

Brothers Hans Martin and Herbert went underground with their wives and survived. Hans Martin emigrated after the war to Israel and lived on a Kibbutz. Herbert stayed with his family in the Netherlands and worked after studies as a construction engineer.



ich deutlich gesehen habe) habe bleiben können. Ich bin übers Dach entwischt aber Ernst lief den Schuften in die Arme, so dass an Entkommen nicht mehr zu denken war. Gelassen trug er vor da an sein Urteil, von dem er sicher war. Nur tat es ihm Leid, dass er seine Schwiegermutter mit ins Unglück gestürzt hatte, wie er dachte, und er hatte im Gefängnis noch gerade Zeit, ihr dies zu sagen. Er war ein tapferer Junge, wie mir einige Freunde nach dem Kriege über sein Benehmen im KZ. erzählt haben. Man hätte ihn gut dort brauchen können, denn er war ein ausgezeichneter Elektrotechniker, aber sein Strafstempel machte seinen Aufenthalt dort unmöglich.

from a report by Hans Martin Chanan Meyer, Jan 1957 (HHStAW 518\_23656)

Anni van Geest. Wir waren in staendiger Angst vor Entdeckung. Seitens der Gestapo und der Gruenen Polizei wurden sehr haeufig Raazzien auf illegale veranstaltet. Wir flohen deshalb von Ort zu Ort. Es ist mir heute nicht mehr moeglich, alle Unterkuenfte, die wir in der Zeit von Juli 1942 - 5.5.45, dem Tage der Beireiung hatten, aufzuzaehlen. Wir hatten ungefaehr in dieser Zeit 20-25 verschiedene Unterkuenfte, ohne hierbei die vielen Gelegenheiten zu beruecksichtigen, in denen wir unter freiem Himmel trotz Winter und Regen uebernachtet haben. Unter anderem tauchten wir bei folgenden Leuten unter:

From a report by Herbert Meyer, Sept 1956 (HHStAW 518\_2715)

## Selected Resources

- Wilhelm Metzendorf: Geschichte und Geschicke der Heppenheimer Juden. Lorsch 1982
- Zu Meyer, Arthur: Bundesarchiv Gedenkbuch Opfer der Verfolgung der Juden unter der nationalsozialistischen Gewaltherrschaft in Deutschland 1933-1945; [www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch/directory.html.de?id=927442](http://www.bundesarchiv.de/gedenkbuch/directory.html.de?id=927442) (Accessed: 02.02.2020)
- HStAD, G15 Heppenheim, J 287
- HStAW, 518, 27150
- HStAW, 518, 23656
- NL-HaNA\_2.10.50\_400\_0041.jpg (Accessed: 26.04.2020)