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*Basic biographical data*

Name:	Heinz Epe
Other names (by-names, pseud. etc.):	Walter Heinz Epe ; David ; D.D. ; H.E. ; Hansen ; Walter Held ; Sommer
Date and place of birth:	Dec. 25, 1910, Remscheid (Germany)
Date and place of death:	Oct. 28, 1942, unknown place (USSR)
Nationality:	German, later: Norwegian
Occupations, careers, etc.:	Journalist, editor, politician
Time of activity in Trotskyist movement:	1931 - 1940 (lifelong Trotskyist)

Biographical sketch

Heinz (Walter Heinz) Epe was born in Remscheid (Germany, Ruhr area) as third son of Richard Epe (1875-1937) and his wife Adele (maiden name: Held, 1886-1957). Richard Epe ran a small painter business and was a political sympathizer of the rightist *DNVP* (*Deutschnationale Volkspartei, German National People's Party*).

Heinz Epe was married twice; first to a young Czech Trotskyist from whom he soon divorced, than in Norway to Synnøve Rosendahl (1909-1942) from whom he got a son, Ivar Roland (1939-1942).

After having attended secondary school, Heinz Epe in 1928/29 took up studies of law and sociology at the universities of Köln (Cologne), Wien (Vienna) and Berlin, soon joining the ranks of a communist student group and then of the *KPD* (*Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands, Communist Party of Germany*) from which he was officially expelled for 'Trotskyist deviation' in 1932. Indeed, when still a member of the *KPD*, in 1931, he began to develop ideas which were very close to those of Trotsky. In the face of economic difficulties he could not finish his doctorate in sociology, and in Berlin took a job as an assistant to Prof. Felix Halle (1884-1937), a prominent communist lawyer and penal code reformer. In 1932 he became a very active member of the *LO* (*Linke Opposition der KPD, Bolschewiki-Leninisten, Left Opposition of the KPD, Bolshevik-Leninists*), the official German section of the *ILO* (*International Left Opposition*) in which the majority of Trotsky's German followers were organized. Epe soon was co-opted to the editorial board of *LO's* organ *Permanente Revolution* and eventually to the *Reichsleitung* (the political committee) of this organization. After the Nazis had seized power in Germany, Epe – like several dozen other 'prominent' militants of the *LO* – had to leave the country

(March 1933) in order to escape persecution by the Nazis and went to Prague (Czechoslovakia) where he carried on, if only for a short span of time, with his studies of law and political science. In Prague, Epe – who soon should become renowned in the Trotskyist scene by his pseudonym **Walter Held** ('Held' being his mother's maiden name) – together with other Trotskyist emigrants from Germany launched and co-edited the bi-weekly journal *Unser Wort*, perhaps one of the main papers of the Trotskyist movement in the 1930s and one of the eldest and longest running German-language exile papers. As a continuation of *Permanente Revolution*, *Unser Wort* became the organ of the German section which soon was renamed *IKD (Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands, International Communists of Germany)*. Later in 1933 the journal was transferred to Paris, then to Antwerpen and eventually to New York. During the next 6-7 years Epe/Held was of course one of the main international liaison men and organizers of the international Trotskyist movement which at the time was called *International Communist League (ICL, 1933-36)* and *Movement for the Fourth International (1936-38)*, respectively. His ways led him to The Netherlands, Belgium, France, Norway and Sweden. In France he met Trotsky who had settled there after leaving his Turkish exile. In The Netherlands he worked with Henk Sneevliet and participated in an international pre-conference of revolutionary youth movements where he was elected a secretary – together with Willy Brandt – of the newly created *International Bureau of Revolutionary Youth Organizations* which took its headquarters at Oslo (Norway). From mid-1934 Epe/Held was "Trotsky's man at Oslo" in the function of a representative of the *ICL*. Until 1935 he co-edited (with Willy Brandt) the *Organisationsbriefe* and the *Internationales Jugend-Bulletin*. In those years he was deeply involved in unity negotiations with various leftist organizations which were neither reformist nor Stalinist, and in other activities with regard to the launching of a new, *Fourth International*.

Furthermore Epe/Held took also part in the political life of the Norwegian workers movement, got in contact to some Norwegian politician, socialists, trade union organizers and intellectuals. He became also a close collaborator of Jeannette Olsen, the leader of the small Norwegian Trotskyist group, and he published articles in various Norwegian socialist and leftist papers under his pseudonym Walter Held. Besides this, the author statement 'Walter Held' is to be found more or less frequently in many of the theoretical papers and internal bulletins of the international Trotskyist movement of that time. He also maintained a lively correspondence with the *International Secretariat* of the Trotskyist movement, foreign Trotskyist groups and parties and of course with Trotsky himself. His manifold activities both in Norway and abroad have been well documented in some studies and narratives like those by Broué, Lorenz and Dahl [see bibliographical notes at the end of this sketch]. Taking into consideration that many of Trotsky's co-workers were kidnapped and/or murdered by Stalinist agents in the 1930s and that the German leftist immigrants in Norway were under 'surveillance' of both the Norwegian police and local rightists, one must say that Epe/Held's job was a quite dangerous one.

With regard to Epe/Held's uphold in Norway it must be added that it was him who in 1934/35 took care of Leon Trotsky getting asylum in that country and that he was of course Trotsky's closest and most eminent collaborator during those 18 months (June 1935 – December 1936) in which the Trotskyists settled at a small Norwegian town some 30 miles from Oslo. Besides this, Epe/Held made some relevant research work with regard to Trotsky's counter-trial (held in Mexico, 1937) in which the latter revealed the amalgam of lies presented in the famous Moscow show trials. In 1939 Epe and his wife travelled to Paris several times in order to work there with the Trotskyist headquarters.

Epe/Held's life, like that of so many other followers of Trotsky at that time, should come to an early end: after German *Wehrmacht* had occupied Norway in spring 1940, Epe/Held had to leave the country and went to neutral Sweden where he got a refugee status (which, however, meant the prohibition of political activities) and eventually Norwegian citizenship by the Norwegian embassy at Stockholm. In May 1941 Epe/Held – furnished with an immigrant visa to the USA and a transit visa through the USSR and other countries for himself, his wife and child – started travelling from Sweden to the USA via the Soviet Union. Before leaving Sweden for this audacious travel Epe/Held had left a "declaration for publication in the event of something happening to me during my journey through the Soviet

Union" (dated May 16, 1941) which later was published by the Swedish paper *Arbetaren*¹. Indeed, the Epe family was arrested by NKVD officers when crossing Russia by train. According to various eye-witness-reports of survivors, Epe was sent to various Soviet prisons and concentration camps, treated harshly and eventually murdered in October 1942.

The death of Heinz (Oct. 28², 1942) and Synnøve (Aug. 31, 1942) Epe and her son Ivar Roland (Sept. 4, 1942) was verified by Soviet authorities only in January 1956 upon continuing requests from Norwegian diplomats. Only in 1989 Epe/Held was formally rehabilitated by Soviet judicial authorities. The following quotation is taken from *Einhart Lorenz: Heinz Epe – Mitarbeiter von Willy Brandt und Leo Trotzki* (see detailed bibliographic data below):

"Der doppelt verfolgte Flüchtling Heinz Epe, der sich vor dem Faschismus retten konnte, verschwand wie so viele andere deutsche Sozialisten spurlos in der Sowjetunion. Vergessen ist er damit nicht. Sein Name taucht nicht nur in der Literatur über die trotzkistische Bewegung immer wieder auf, auch Willy Brandt geht in seiner Autobiographie "Links und frei" auf das Schicksal und die Arbeit des Remscheiders ein. Die Zahl seiner politischen Gesinnungsgenossen hielt sich in bescheidenen Grenzen und der Trozismus erhielt wenig Anhänger in Norwegen. Das bedeutete aber nicht, daß Epes Worte ungehört verhallten. Seine Anklagen gegen den stalinistischen Terror, der, wie Epe zeitig schrieb, seine Schlagkraft der Argumentation im Kampf gegen den Faschismus schwächte, zeugten von einem aufrechten Gang. Die von ihm initiierten Appelle in der Asylrechtsfrage, seine Artikel über Nazi-Deutschland und seine freundschaftlichen Beziehungen zu norwegischen Intellektuellen haben das geistige und politische Klima des Landes bereichert und dazu beigetragen, gegen den Faschismus zu immunisieren, dessen Opfer Norwegen im April 1940 wurde."

Selective bibliography ³

- ***Selective Bibliography: books and journals (co-)authored or edited by Epe***

- Epe, Walter: Die spanische Revolution / Walter Held [i.e. Heinz Epe]. - Paris : J. Meichler, [1937].- 45 pp.
- Epe, Walter: Revolutie en contra-revolutie in Spanje / Walter Held [i.e. Heinz Epe]. - [Rotterdam] : Groep van Bolsjewiki-Leninisten, 1937.
- Permanente Revolution : Wochenschrift der Linken Opposition der KPD (Bolschewiki-Leninisten), Sektion der Internationalen Linken Opposition (Berlin) <TSB 1192>
- Trotsky, Leon: Wohin geht Frankreich? / Leo Trotzki. Die Volksfront in Frankreich / Walter Held [i.e. Heinz Epe]. - Wien : N. Bernard, 1975. - XVIII, 101 pp.
- Unser Wort : Halbmonatsschrift der Deutschen Sektion der Internationalen Linken Opposition (later: der Internationalen Kommunisten Deutschlands (Prag, later: Paris, later: Antwerpen, later: New York, NY) <TSB 1761> [Although not mentioned in the masthead, this exile paper of the German Trotskyists, being the continuation of 'Permanente Revolution' (Berlin) at the beginning was co-edited and factually managed by Epe who contributed many articles, too]

- ***Selective Bibliography: books, journals and bulletins to which Epe contributed***

- Arbeiderbladet (Oslo)
- Bulletin de la Ligue des Communistes Internationalistes (Bolcheviks-Léninistes) (Amsterdam) <TSB 0178>
- Dagbladet (Oslo)
- Documents sur la révolution espagnole (1937-1939) / trad.: Daniel Couret. - Paris : CERMTRI, 1993. - 68 pp. - (Les cahiers du C.E.R.M.T.R.I. ; 71)

1) An English translation was published in *Revolutionary History* (London), 1.1989 (4), pp. 41-42.

2) According to *In den Fängen des NKWD : deutsche Opfer des stalinistischen Terrors in der UdSSR*, Berlin, 1991, p. 66). Other sources have given the date of December 28.

3) TSB item numbers (e.g. <TSB 0716>) refer to Lubitz' *Trotskyist Serials Bibliography*, München [etc.], 1993 which is out of print but now [available as a PDF file](#) within the framework of our *Lubitz' TrotskyanaNet* website. In TSB you can find detailed descriptions concerning the respective Trotskyist papers, journals, bulletins and the like.

Documents sur la révolution espagnole (50e anniversaire). - Paris : CERMTRI. - 84 pp. - (Les cahiers du C.E.R.M.T.R.I. ; 41)

Fourth International (New York, NY) <TSB 0532>

Informationsdienst / Internationale Kommunisten Deutschlands (Paris) <TSB 0745>

Internal Bulletin / Socialist Workers Party (New York, NY) <TSB 1548>

International Bulletin / International Bureau of Revolutionary Youth Organisations (New York, NY) <TSB 0682>

International Information Bulletin / Spartacus Youth League (New York, NY) <TSB 1660>

Internationale Jugendinformation der IKL (Bolschewiki-Leninisten) (Paris) <TSB 0744>

Internationales Jugend-Bulletin / Internationales Büro Revolutionärer Jugendorganisationen (Stockholm) <TSB 0759>

Mitteilungsblatt der IKD (Antwerpen) <TSB 1060>

The New International (New York, NY) <TSB 1089>

Österreich-Bulletin (Antwerpen) <TSB 1133>

Oktober : organ for marxistisk-leninistisk politikk (Oslo) <TSB 1138>

Permanente Revolution : Wochenschrift der Linken Opposition der KPD (Bolschewiki-Leninisten), Sektion der Internationalen Linken Opposition (Berlin) <TSB 1192>

Quatrième Internationale (S.I., later: Gilly, later: Bruxelles, later: Paris, later: Montreuil) <TSB 1282>

Reich, Wilhelm: Carteggio 1933-1935 / Wilhelm Reich ; Lev Trotsky. Introd. di Alain Calvi. [A cura di Paolo Casciola]. - Foligno : Centro Studi Pietro Tresso, 1991. - 20 pp. - (Quaderni del Centro Studi Pietro Tresso : Serie Dagli archivi del bolscevismo ; 9)

Revolutionary History (London) <TSB 1375>

Service de presse / Ligue des Communistes-Internationalistes (Bolcheviks-Léninistes), Secrétariat International (Amsterdam) <TSB 1467>

Service d'information et de presse de la LCI(B-L) (Paris) <TSB 1468>

Service d'information et de presse pour la Quatrième Internationale (Paris, Anvers) <TSB 1469>

Unser Wort (Prag, later: Paris, later: Antwerpen; later: New York, NY) <TSB 1761>

What Next : Marxist discussion journal (London)

- **Selective Bibliography: articles about Epe**

[Anon.]: Epe, Walter Heinz, in: *Biographisches Handbuch der deutschsprachigen Emigration nach 1933*, Bd. 1, München [etc.], 1980, p. 159. [Biographical sketch]

[Anon.]: Walter Held. [Biographical sketch, Wikipedia article]

[Anon.]: Walter Held (Heinz Epe) : biographische Notiz. - 3 pp. [Unsigned ms., dated Nov. 23, 1977, Trotsky Collection, Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Cal., box 28, folder 12]

Alles, Wolfgang: Heinz Epe (Walter Held) (1910-1942), in: *Alles, Wolfgang: Einheitsfront gegen Faschismus*, Köln, 2022, pp. 265. [Biographical sketch]

Berens, Peter: Der Remscheider Heinz Epe als Sekretär Trotzki's, in: *Berens, Peter: Trotzlisten gegen Hitler*, Köln, 2007 : pp. 121-125

Berens, Peter: Talente, die sich nicht entfalten konnten : Heinz Epe (Walter Held), 1910-1942, in: *Avanti* <TSB 0069>, 16.2010 (182) : pp. 20-21. [Biographical sketch]

Breidenbach, Armin: Remscheider war Trotzki's Sekretär. - [1-2], in: *Remscheider General-Anzeiger*, 96.1984 (Dec.12=Nr. 289); 97.1985 (Jan.4=Nr.3). [Pt. 1 unnumbered, pt. 2 designated as pt. 3 by error. Pt. 2 titled "Remscheider Student war Trotzki's Sekretär"]

B[roué], P[ierre]: Epe, Heinz, in: *Dictionnaire biographique du mouvement ouvrier international : L'Allemagne*, Paris, 1990, pp. 176-177. [Biographical sketch]

Broué, Pierre: Quelques proches collaborateurs de Léon Trotsky, in: *Cahiers Léon Trotsky* <TSB 0277>, 1979 (1) : pp.61-85. [On pp. 79-84: Walter Held.] [Biographical sketch]

Broué, Pierre: Walter Held / [transl. By Ted Crawford], in: *Revolutionary History*, 1.1988/89 (2) : pp. 7-9. [Biographical sketch]

Dahl, Nils Kaare: Some memories of Walter Held, in: *Revolutionary History*, 1.1988/89 (2) : pp. 9-11. [With sub-chapters on "Into exile" and "Held's disappearance"]

Dossier Walter Held (1910-1942) - dødsdømt av Hitler, myrdet av Stalin [Electronic resource]. [Contents (as at

- Febr. 2009): Pierre Broué: Walter Held; Nils K. Dahl: Noen erindringer om Walter Held; Mer om Walter Held]
- Lorenz, Einhart: Heinz Epe – Mitarbeiter von Willy Brandt und Leo Trotzki, in: *Widerstand und Verfolgung in Remscheid 1933-1945*, Bd. 2, Wuppertal, 1986 : pp. 16-26
- Lorenz, Einhart: Möglichkeiten und Grenzen des politischen Exils in Norwegen am Beispiel von Willy Brandt, Heinz Epe, Max Strobl und Jacob Nicolaus Vogel, in: *Exilforschung - ein internationales Jahrbuch*, 8, 1990, pp. 174-184.
- Lorenz, Einhart: Vår kamerat i Oslo : om Heinz Epe/Walter Held og hans bidrag til a fã Trockij til Norge, in: *Tidsskrift for arbeiderbevegelsens historie*, 11.1986 (1) : pp. 149-161. [With German summary]
- The Walter Held file, in: *Revolutionary History*, 1.1988/89 (4), pp.39-43. [Containing: 1) Two letters from Harrison E. Salisbury (summary), 2) A letter from Albert Glotzer, 3) The case of Heinz Epe/Walter Held, by Nils K. Dahl, 4) Erlich's letter on Epe/Held, 5) The fate of Erlich and Alter, 6) Held's declaration, 7) The international context of the Held affair, 8) Summary of the Epe/Held file, by Nils K. Dahl, 9) Nils Dahl's comments on the case]

Note: More informations about Epe are likely to be found in some of the books, pamphlets, university works and articles listed in the relevant chapters of the *Lubitz' Leon Trotsky Bibliography [ISSN 2190-0183]*, e.g. in chapter [7.5.08](#).

Note: Some writings by Epe are available online within *Marxists' Internet Archive's* [Walter Held \(Heinz Epe\)](#) section.

Notes on archives

— Epe maintained extensive correspondence with Trotsky, Sedov, Wolf, [Ackerknecht](#), Sneevliet and others. Much of his correspondence is to be found in the respective archive collections, e.g. in the *Leon Trotsky exile papers (MS Russ 13.1)* at *Houghton Library* (Cambridge, Mass.), in the *Trotskii-Sedov Papers (series 231 of the Boris I. Nicolaevsky Collection)* in the *Hoover Institution Archives, Stanford, Cal.*, in the collection *Lev Davidovič Trockij / International Left Opposition Archives* and in the *Papers of R. Prager*, both held by the *International Institute of Social History (Amsterdam)*⁴

Another eminent source for research on Epe is without doubt the *Arbeiderbevegelsens Arkiv og Bibliotek* (Oslo). Documents about Epe's expatriation from Germany are stored at the *Nordrhein-Westfälisches Hauptstaatsarchiv* (Düsseldorf) where can also be found traces of Epe within the files *Deutsche Emigrantentätigkeit im Ausland*. Further informations about Epe, particularly about his stay in Norway, can be found in autobiographies of other emigrants who had got asylum in Scandinavia, such for example in Willy Brandt's autobiographical work *Links und frei* (Hamburg : Hoffmann & Campe, 1982).

— Some sources mention "Audi" as a pseudonym of Heinz Epe; this is wrong, since "Audi" was a pseudonym of a German communist journalist who lived as a political refugee in Norway, Jacob Nicolaus Vogel (1896-1969).

Wolfgang and Petra Lubitz, 2006
last (slightly) rev. November 2022

⁴ For some details about the mentioned archives and collections see the *Archives : America* and *Archives : Europe* chapters within the framework of our *Lubitz' TrotskyanaNet* website.