

January 27 2023, Holocaust-Memorial Day in Munich-Obermenzing

Location: Catholic church of Leiden Christi

Tonight we remember **Trina Kuttner** née Kahn who at the end of January 1939 found refuge not far from here in a house in the “Villenkolonie II”. She had moved to Munich from Memmelsdorf in Unterfranken to escape the growing anti-Semitism in her little village. She must have hoped to be safer in the anonymity of the big city.

A few years before, in 1936 Trina’s nephew Simon Kahn who lived in downtown Munich in a big flat at Gaertnerplatz together with his wife and son had bought this villa in Apfelallee as a weekend retreat for himself and friends.

Soon this house became the refuge for several Kahn-relatives from Memmelsdorf and Mühlhausen, while Simon and his wife Martha and their only child Erich were preparing their emigration to New York. And despite the beginning of WWII they were able to emigrate in November 1939.

The six relatives who lived in the villa at different times, among them two children, did not survive.

Many relatives of Trina had already immigrated to America, some of them even before the turn of the 19th century.

Yes, Trina herself, born in 1860, had immigrated from Memmelsdorf to New York as a young girl at the age of 18. She lived with her sister Minnie Opler’s family in Lower Manhattan working as a seamstress in the knitting manufacture of her brother-in-law. In 1887 she had married a Jewish musician from Texas. She had spent many years in the metropolis before she returned to Germany, first to Berlin. But after 1918 she had moved back to Memmelsdorf to take care of her widowed brother Selig Kahn before she moved to Munich some years after Selig’s death in 1935.

Now, totally uprooted in this absolute solitude, she reminisced about the glorious past in New York. And as some kind of a family-head she tried to keep close contact with those family members living in freedom.

While researching as a history-group on “Traces of Jewish lives in Pasing and Obermenzing” by chance a copy of Trina’s letter appeared, a letter once written in the villa in Obermenzing to some relatives in America. The addressee was not known, because the letter-head was missing, but we finally found the name of the person: a nephew of Trina. He and his wife had succeeded in emigrating as late as May 1940.

In her letter Trina mentions many names; they are all relatives living in Munich or in America, all knowing each other. Of the ten relatives living in Munich at that time no one survived the NS-terror.

Here is the letter:

*I am spending lonely days and nights here, also **Carrie** (Kahn). We do not know anybody. Twice a week I visit **Berth** and **Mina** (Kahn). There I also see **Martha** (Wassermann) **and her kids** (Julius and Margot). This is our only distraction. Saturday I visited **Kaufmanns** (David and Klara) to congratulate them to their golden wedding anniversary. **Frida** (Kaufmann, New York) has written to them that many Memmelsdorf relatives have gathered at **Bertha Kaufmann's** (New York). During your New York visit there was never a dull moment, I am sure. One invitation followed another one. I would love to participate, believe me. Quite often I am struck by a yearning for my relatives. But it will be as destiny decides.*

*Once I visited **your sister Stein** (Clara Stein) hoping to hear more about your whereabouts. But she had no news or an address of you. She promised to contact me as soon as she hears from you; but so far no news.*

Are you staying at your farm frequently? You are living in town, residing in your own little house.

***Berthold** (Kahn) is working at a gardener's establishment. **Fredi** is finishing school in a few weeks, he will become a locksmith apprentice. He has grown a lot, he is also quite well-behaved.*

*Glad to hear that **Ruth Prager** made a good choice, also that **Martha** (Prager) is engaged. Soon it will be **Suse's** (Wassermann) turn. It would be nice if Pragers would write to me.*

*Quite frequently I hear from **Stern**, he asked for your address because he wants to write to you. He is still enjoying life. I do not recall if I gave him your address. Here is his address, so you can write to him. **Siegfried Stern 319 N Sycamore Ave, Los Angeles, California.***

*Now, my loved ones, please think of us and figure out how you can help us, cordial greetings to all of you and kisses from your **old aunt Trina**.*

*Have you heard from **Nathan** (Goldmeier)?*

*Well, with this letter I have responded to all the **Goldmeier**-letters. Write soon, greetings to all the farm-relatives.*

Over 2 ½ years, from the end of January 1939 to October 1941, Trina lived in the house in Obermenzing. On October 20th 1941 she was forced by the Nazis to leave the house together with Carrie Kahn, her niece-in-law, who had been her companion since Dec. 1939. They were forced to move to a Jewish camp in Berg am Laim (Munich). A month later on November 20th 1941 Carrie Kahn had to join the big transport of Munich Jews (1000 persons) to Kaunas, together with her relatives **Berthold, Mina and Fredi Kahn**. In Kaunas all thousand Jews were shot on November 25th 1941.

Half a year later on June 25th 1942 Trina was deported to Theresienstadt. Her date of death is given as March 6th 1943. The cause of death is unknown.

Earlier in my speech I mentioned the surprising appearance of Trina's letter. **Siegbert Kahn**, the son of Carrie Kahn, Trina's Munich house companion, who had escaped to Palestine in 1939 visited his relatives in the US after the war, the addressees of Trina's letter. They gave him a copy of the letter. Mrs. **Cordula Kappner**, a local historian from Unterfranken found Siegbert through her research. And she got a copy of the letter which she graciously gave to us. At least this letter has survived; even though the author of the letter and her ten relatives were murdered in Kaunas, Piaski and Theresienstadt.

One more remark:

For a long time we searched for a photo of Trina Kuttner without success. But just recently we may have found a solution. Erich, the son of Simon and Martha Kahn who emigrated in 1939 had taken many family photos with his Leica. When he emigrated he buried his Leica in the Garden of the Villa in Obermenzing. But luckily the 15-year old boy saved his beloved photo album, when he left for New York. A series of photos in this album document a hiking tour to "Wallberg" a mountain in the Bavarian Alps, around 1935/36. Participants of the tour are Erich, his parents and an elderly lady, whom he titles "Oma". Most likely this white haired lady with a walking cane is Trina, his "substitute Oma". He never met his real Memmelsdorf Oma, because she had died before he was born; his Memmelsdorf "Opa" had passed away in 1935. His grandfather on his mother's side had died in Furth im Wald in 1931, his wife, Erich's second grandmother, had fled to Czechoslovakia with her family in 1933. A crossing of the Czech border was no longer possible for her.

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