



Bernhard Kolb, Nuremberg

(September 22, 1882 in Sugenheim – October 16, 1971 in Vineland, NJ (USA))

Childhood

Mr. Bernhard Kolb, the former secretary of the Jewish congregation of Nuremberg, was born in Sugenheim, Middle Franconia, on September 22, 1882.

He was the first child of the horse dealer Hermann Kolb and his wife Emma nee Baer. After the sudden death of his father, in January 1893, he was enrolled into the Jewish orphanage in Fuerth. He attended school there and continued his compulsory schooling in the Buergerschule in Fuerth.



Four of five Kolb brothers in 1907/08: sitting on the left side Siegfried (born 1883, killed in action 1914), behind him standing Stefan (b. 1891, k.i.a. 1914), sitting on the right side Bernhard, behind him Hugo (b. 1890, killed by the Nazis in 1942). Not in the picture is August (b. 1886, killed in action in 1916).

(Photo: Mr. Herbert Kolb)

On August 1, 1896, he started as a commercial apprentice and reported for duty in the Bavarian Army in 1904. After two years of active duty he was assigned to the reserve on September 24, 1906. In case of war, his orders were to report to active duty immediately, before general mobilization. During the years before the First World War he worked in different jobs as a clerk and later on was self employed. He traveled by bicycle from village to village selling men's undergarments and shirts.

Service during First World War

On August 6, 1914, he reported back to duty to his reserve unit, and was on the front a very short time later. Already on August 25, 1914 he was wounded for the first time. During the war, between 1914 and 1918 he was in the trenches most of the time. All four of his brothers were also on the front. He and three of them from the start of the war. Two of them were killed in 1914 and the third died during the battle of Verdun in 1916.

Founding a family



Bernhard Kolb with his daughter Erna in 1927

(Photo: Mr. Herbert Kolb)

As soon as he was discharged from the army after the war, he was hired by the government to provide assistance to wounded veterans and families of dead soldiers. Bernhard Kolb married Reta Hessdoerfer on May 27, 1920 in the Hauptsynagoge in Nuremberg, after having been married by the state a month earlier. The couple's first child, a son, Herbert was born on February 27, 1922. On February 7, 1923 Bernhard Kolb was hired by the Jewish congregation in Nuremberg as general director and business executive. On July 31, 1923, he became a father for the second time, when his daughter Erna was born.

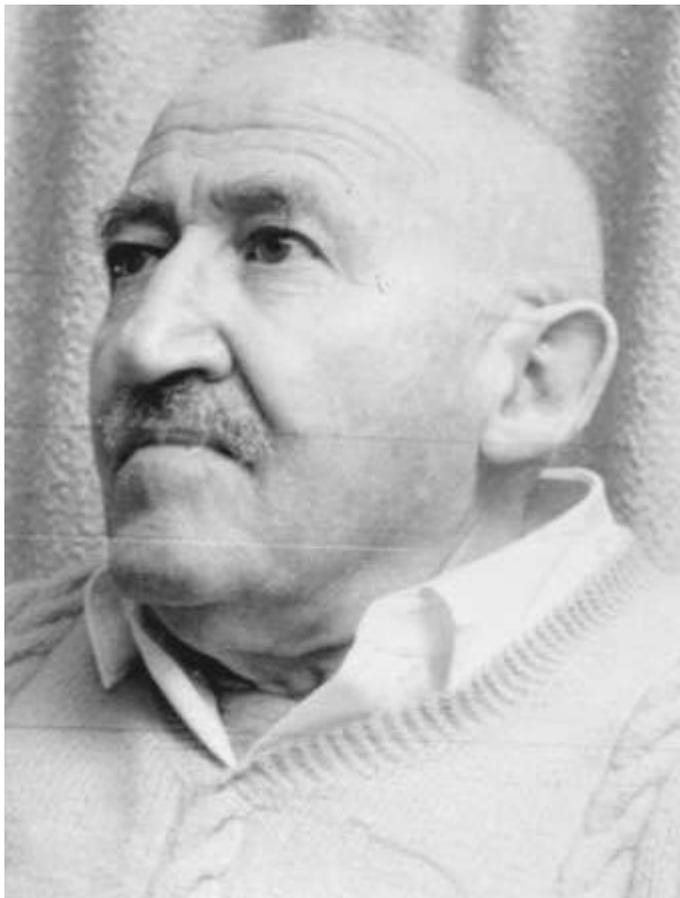
The Nazi era

Between the years 1933 and his deportation into the concentration camp Theresienstadt, on June 18, 1943 he almost daily had to appear at the Gestapo headquarters, as the head of the Jewish congregation, and was subjected to the threats and insults from the officials of the "master-race".

During the time of Nazi terror, he, as well as many other Jewish people from Nuremberg, was brutalized and arrested in the night of November 9 - 10, 1938 and shipped to the infamous concentration camp Dachau. There for some weeks he was terrorized and beaten by the SS, the hangmen of the German elite.

On January 12, 1942 his sister Babette was deported to Auschwitz. She was murdered there and shortly afterwards her daughter and family followed to the same place and had the same fate. On March 25, 1942, Bernhard's last brother Hugo was deported with his wife and children and murdered in Poland. His daughter Erna was deported on October 23, 1944 from Theresienstadt and murdered in Bergen-Belsen. Also her husband and their child were killed by the German supermen. Bernhard Kolb and his wife survived the Nazi terror, only because they were held as hostages, and then time ran out on the murderers, when they and their son were liberated by Russian troops.

Emigration to the United States and late life



Bernhard Kolb in 1971

(Photo: Mr. Herbert Kolb)

On January 3, 1947, after one and a half years of waiting and four months in emigration camps, Bernhard Kolb emigrated with his wife and son to the United States of America. For him it was impossible to remain in the country for which he fought and bled, and for which his brothers and the brother of his wife died, and who had murdered almost every one of his family.

Shortly after his immigration into the United States he started working as a night-watchman and cleaning person in a clothing factory. By May 1947, he, who was completely penniless, was able to buy a very small chicken farm in Vineland, New Jersey, through the financing of a Jewish organization. This farm was very primitive and had to be first built up so that it could provide a livelihood for two people. During that time he still worked in the factory and his wife worked as a maid.

Once the small farm was established, he was satisfied with this simple life and the long hours of work and lived there happily until the 16th of October 1971. Seeing his three grandchildren grow up in a peaceful environment gave great joy and meaning to his twilight years.

He never once mentioned any desire to visit Germany, the country of his birth, and of many generations of his ancestors, which, throughout his life, repaid all his sacrifices with ingratitude.

November 2000

Herbert Kolb