

Only One Day Away from Rescue

BY GABI EISENACK

Two people who loved each other. A common child—a daughter. A family like millions of others. A state of quiet bliss. Yet their time together was limited. Death came in a uniform. The Mosbachers were Jews, who were not spared the Nazi extermination machinery. Only Rosi, their daughter, would survive. "Stolpersteine" ("Stumbling Stones") today recall her parents, Hugo and Clementine, in front of the building where they once lived, in Hallerstrasse 27. Rosi's son, Anthony Baczewski, who lives in the U.S., placed a monument there for his murdered grandparents.

In Munich, this form of remembrance has caused a lot of debate. Charlotte Knobloch, the Chairwoman of the Jewish Community in the Bavarian state capital, is of the opinion that people are stepping on the victims in this way. Ultimately, the Munich City Council prohibited "Stumbling Stones" on public grounds. In Nuremberg, they were never rejected. To the contrary. "The city views these actions very positively," said Chief Press Secretary Siegfried Zelnhefer. Even Arno Hamburger, the long-time Chairman of the Jewish Community, who died in 2013, did not share Charlotte Knobloch's position.

In 2003, the Stumbling Stones became a topic at the initiative of the Green Party in the Cultural Committee of the Nuremberg City Council, where the project of Cologne artist Gunter Demnig, who had already implemented the idea in several German cities, was emphatically welcomed. In the same year, the first little monuments were placed in Nuremberg's Hochstrasse. Meanwhile, more than 70 Stumbling Stones now recall victims of the Holocaust in Nuremberg.

Judy Vasos Baczewski also wanted such a memorial for the grandparents of her husband Anthony. She has made it her mission to keep the memory of the fate of the Mosbachers alive. She wrote down what Rosi Baczewski had told her: a story of separation, suffering and pain, of a new beginning and a return to life. At some point, the aging woman sent her daughter-in-law a package with letters. They were the mailed letters she had received from 1940 to 1943 from her parents who were in exile in the Netherlands.



In Hallerstrasse 37 lived the Mosbachers, a small happy family, until the Nazis brought death and misery to the world. Rosi Mosbacher, the daughter, never returned to her home town from the U.S. Photo: Thomas Correll

Rosi Mosbacher, whose name became Baczewski after her marriage, was born on July 14, 1916 in Nuremberg. She grew up sheltered, her parents being religious Jews. The family was sociable and received a lot of visitors in their home in Hallerstrasse. The girl was particularly close with her father, a friendly and humorous man. When the Nazis took power in 1933, the Mosbachers' life changed dramatically. Segregation, hostility, fear ruled their daily lives. During Kristallnacht, a brown shirt mob broke into their apartment. The family spent the night in a Jewish senior citizens' home, shocked and frightened. Hugo Mosbacher was arrested and taken to the concentration camp in Dachau. He was interned there

for 45 days. When he returned, he found his home destroyed. He had lost his job in a metallurgy plant. A lot of Jews were thinking about emigrating. But the Mosbachers weren't ready yet. Only Rosi was to go, traveling to stay with her aunt in the U.S. In 1939, Rosi initially fled to England, then on to the U.S. She planned to reunite with her parents there.

A Long Wait for a Visa

While Hugo and Clemey Mosbacher waited in Nuremberg for their visa, the situation became worse and worse. Finally, they traveled to the Netherlands to stay with relatives and then emigrate from the Port of Rotterdam to the U.S. They lived for three years in Amsterdam, writing more than 100 letters to their child in New York. They were happy that Rosi was in safety. Just how they were doing was something their daughter couldn't find out. Rosi met her future husband Alexander Baczewski, who was also Jewish and had fled Austria to the U.S. Rosi wanted to wait to marry until her parents were there, but the two urged the young woman to realize her plans at once. They indeed already sensed that a reunion was becoming more and more improbable.

On May 11, 1940, the ship that was to take the Mosbachers to America was scheduled to dock. On May 10, the Germans invaded the Netherlands. There was no escape for the couple from Nuremberg. "They were captured in Amsterdam," said Judy Vasos Baczewski. "It stuns me that they were only one day away from rescue."

In their letters, meanwhile, they gave their daughter courage. Their only child should not learn anything about their desperate situation. She should build a new life and find happiness. The last letter Rosi received from her parents arrived in January 1943. In that year, Hugo and Clemey were arrested, deported to Auschwitz and gassed at the start of February. Only after the end of the War did their daughter Rosi become certain that she would never see her parents again. She never wanted to return to Germany. But when her son Tony took a trip with his wife, she gave the two a long list to take with them. She had written down the places the young couple should visit in Nuremberg—places that had played an important role in her life: Hallerstrasse, The Burg, the Jewish cemetery in Fuerth.

Rosi Baczewski lived until she was 93. Shortly before she died, she read the letters from her parents one more time. "She would have liked that Stumbling Stones today recall Hugo and Clemey in Nuremberg," Judy Vasos Baczewski said. These little monuments make a big impact...maybe much more than a large museum."



Hugo and Clementine Mosbacher lived with their daughter Rosi in Nuremberg's Hallerstrasse. The child managed to flee to the United States. Her parents were deported from the Netherlands to Auschwitz. Photo: private



In front of the building in Hallerstrasse, "Stumbling Stones" now recall the Mosbachers. They were laid at the initiative of their descendants. Photo: Thomas Correll