

Dr. Hans Martin Hammelbacher, Nuremberg
(6.1.1911 in Nuremberg - 13.9.2002 in Forest Hills, NY)

Hans Martin Hammelbacher was born in Nuremberg, Germany on January 6, 1911 as the only son of the merchant Jakob Hammelbacher and his wife Else, née Weinschenk.

Hammelbacher studied in Munich and graduated as a doctor from the legal faculty of the University of Würzburg on October 22, 1934, with subsequent studies at both the Sorbonne in Paris and the London School of Economics.

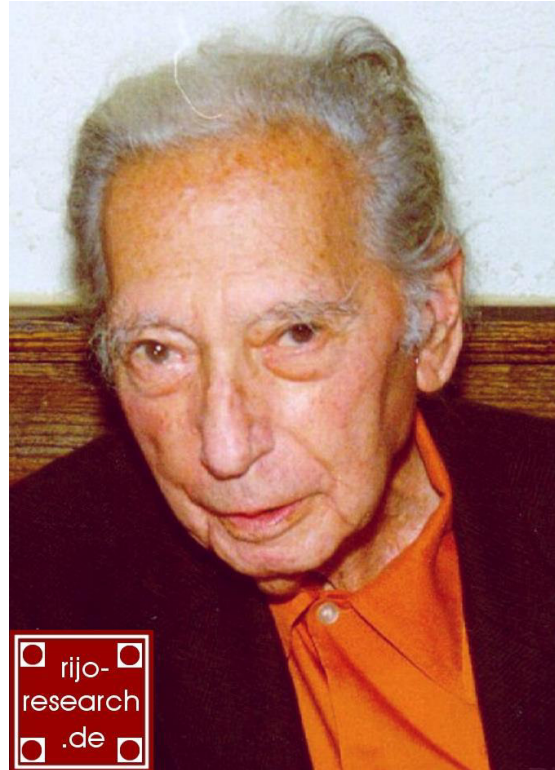
His hopes for an academic career in Germany dashed by the Nazis, Hammelbacher entered the family business, the hops trading firm Weinschenk & Hammelbacher at Klaragasse 32 in Nuremberg. On March 2, 1937, he married Hella Tuchmann, also from Nuremberg.

In his recollections he described the pogrom of *Kristallnacht* in 1938 and his and his father's eventual flight to France:

On November 9 my father made a business trip to Switzerland; he wanted to return the following day. At 2 a.m. on November 10 SA troopers came to our apartment building, one group to a floor.

The Jewish occupant of the apartment above us was badly beaten, the one downstairs taken to Dachau. I was left untouched. "Our" men were content to smash one brass ashtray stand, and to haul away all our prayer books in a laundry basket.

For the rest of the day I went into hiding in our superintendent's apartment. In the evening Hella drove me to the railroad station where I boarded the train to Strasbourg, while the patrolling SA troopers were looking in the other direction. At the border town of Kehl a regular policeman came to my compartment, asked me if I had more than 10 marks, saluted and left; the SS were busy rounding up Jews. A minute later the train crossed the Rhine and soon pulled into the station in Strasbourg. When I telephoned Hella, the connection was unusually clear for that time and I had to convince her I was safely in France.



Dr. Hammelbacher on his 91st birthday
(photo: private)

Hella drove to Munich with my mother, taking along other family members; they stayed in a hotel until it seemed safe to return home. At that time Jewish women were not nearly as endangered as men.

I rented a room in a hotel in Haguenau, Alsace, where we had a business friend. My father had to be persuaded not to return to Germany, and joined me after a short while.

Hammelbacher's wife and his mother were unable to leave Germany until April, 1, 1939, and then only after signing over the entire family's belongings to the Nazis.

Making their way to London, the Hammelbacher family waited six months until their U.S. immigration visas were approved and finally arrived in the USA in December, 1939, by which time World War II had broken out in Europe.

Hammelbacher began work as a stock boy in Wallach's, a men's clothing store in New York City. Over the next five years he advanced to salesman and buyer and then began working in the packaging business, subsequently joining a large firm where he remained until his retirement.

From 1980 to 1999 Hammelbacher served as president of The Blue Card, Inc., a charitable organization aiding needy Jewish emigrants and Holocaust survivors since 1939. For twelve years he was also the author of The Blue Card's annual Rosh Hashanah calendar. In addition to his many years of devoted work on behalf of The Blue Card, Hammelbacher was a long-time officer and member of the Board of Directors of Congregation Habonim, a Jewish community in NYC founded by emigrants from Germany.

Dr. Hans Martin Hammelbacher died on September 13, 2002, at the age of 91. His wife Hella passed away on September 18, 2010.

Gerhard Jochem

Literature and sources

- Gerhard Jochem: Mitten in Nürnberg. Nuremberg 1998.
- Nuremberg City Archives, holding C 21/III inhabitants' registry #1980.
- Helping Hand Newsletter of The Blue Card, Inc., vol. II, issue 2 (fall 2002).
- Correspondence with Mr. Frank Hammelbacher (son), July 2011.

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