

Text of the Video – English Transcription

After my parents were married they came here over the mountains from their honeymoon. My father knew about Wolfsgrub and it was a remarkable coincidence that this house was for sale just at that moment. My father said: "This old house here at the edge of the world would be just the right place for us." So they settled in, got a few goats and lived here very secluded and very poor. My father decided not to be a doctor anymore and wanted to write. I mean, the whole start of their life here... they were real outsiders. My father wrote in the evening - at night, mainly. He woke up late and when he got up they'd have a meal and then they'd go on a long walk with the dog. People still tell me: "We remember how your parents - with huge strides - the wife was always running behind him - we thought they were always arguing..." But they were just having lively discussions. My father always told her about what he'd written that night and my mother went along and listened and they always talked it through... The result was the play that brought him such big success, *Improvisations in June*... "Europe is dead. Long live the Europeans!" That was the motto of the play. Europe is dead. Long live the Europeans - I have the same feeling now... Well anyway - it was a very happy time. He continued writing but never had another hit. He had some success with *Ramper*. Actually, it was staged all over the country, but it was never quite the same. He grew steadily dissatisfied and withdrew more and more from here. And so, on one hand - it came from inside him. He began to feel cramped in Wolfsgrub. In the meantime, I was born and kiddie life began here. It was never his intention to start a family here... And then from outside National Socialism began closing in and he must have begun to realize that in Germany there wasn't any room for him. In another sense he'd come to a dead end and my mother sensed it very keenly without knowing that he was a Jew. She wanted to make it possible for him to go. He needed to get away from wife, from child, he needed to focus on himself and start something new. He decided to be a doctor again and emigrated to China. My mother didn't think of it as a final break. She thought, that in a few years we'd join him there. But things worked out differently...

What is still clear in my memory one day shortly before his departure he took me for a ride on his bicycle. I was sitting in front on the crossbar, we drove to Rottach, where he bought me some sweets. We rode along the lake, a little path where there was an old tree, right at that exact spot he said: „Evalein, soon I'm going very far away, over the big ocean and later I'll come to get you and your mother too." And then he added something that was not so nice. He said: „Your mother doesn't want me anymore and that's why I'm leaving". Of course I wasn't able to make much of what he was saying. But in hindsight it was really unfair of him because it wasn't true at all. I remember so distinctly the way he said it to me. I don't remember much about the preparations for his departure. Only the day we took him by taxi to Munich and said goodbye. He didn't want us to come into the train station with him. And I remember how sad Mommy was. I didn't feel it quite the same way. Then we went back home in the taxi. For him it was just a completely new start and after some initial problems he built a practice and was a doctor again. After having been, as a writer, somehow, not what he wanted... Mother never really knew, why he had left. Maybe he would have gone anyway but the real point was that he was a Jew and had to go. He never said that to my mother. All he said was that he felt too confined in Wolfsgrub. All the tension between the two of them came mainly because he was unhappy and dissatisfied with himself. But that there were also important and very real other reasons that he *had* to go, that it had become dangerous for him here - it was 1934 - he never said that to Mommy.

Years before he had a bad experience with antisemitism and since then he never spoke about being a Jew. She knew his family had something to do with it. But that didn't mean anything to her. They didn't say: „This is a Jew or that is not a Jew," anyway not in our social circle. Later she got a letter from the Reichsschriftumskammer saying that my father was expelled from the authors association. They burned his books and they sent back his medals from the First World War for bravery as a doctor. They stated, simply, Dr. Max Mohr had never received any medals. So she wrote a letter to my father in China and asked “What is going on here?” And he wrote back that it was true. She was all alone here with her fear and needed to see her way through it. I mean, she understood, but in hindsight, it was wrong of him because he put Mommy in danger.

(Nicolas:)

And you too.

(Eva:)

And me too.

(Nicolas:)

Had you prepared to leave here for China?

(Eva:)

Yes. My father said he wanted to start up a practice first and as soon as he was earning enough income he would send for us. In 1937 he wrote that everything was going well and we should start thinking about coming soon. And Mommy, in all her enthusiasm and also out of love for my father got right on board. I remember one day we traveled to Munich and bought two new winter coats - mine was blue, hers greenish, and a large, very light suitcase, a kind of airplane bag. Did she want to fly? Maybe it wasn't even possible back then. You know the suitcase. I still have it. Very light leather case. It cost a fortune in those days. That was about the extent of our preparations. In November - I don't really know if she already had definite dates, anyway, the suitcase and the coats were the preparations for the trip, I was in school and during class, suddenly old Hiasl came in. He was an old woodcutter and lived in a little cottage nearby, a very good friend of ours, a wonderful man. Old, he seemed to me, ancient, maybe 70 or so, small, compact. He came into the classroom, knocked at the door, and said: „Evi has to go home.“ My teacher asked why, and he just said: “Evi has to go home.” So I packed my stuff up and left with him. On the way home I asked him: „Hiasl, what's the matter?“ And he said: „Your father has died. Your mother wants you to come home.“ I remember how I pedalled along behind him across the meadow. Honestly, I admit, it didn't mean that much to me. My father had been gone a long time and I was a child. But I came here into this room and Mommy was sitting on the bench near the stove, sobbing and crying. I know exactly how I ran right to her and took her in my arms. Then I made one of those tactful childish remarks: „Oh, Mommy, don't be sad, a widow with child will always manage.“ Mommy always said afterwards that it was the first time that she had heard the word ‚widow‘. I guess I knew it from fairy tales. And she said it cut straight into her. All I can remember is she took me out of school for a couple of days. After that life went on. For my mother it was very sad. Shortly before his death a telegram had come - “I love you“, or something like that. He always loved to send telegrams...

(Nicolas:)

You once told me that you didn't believe he was dead.

(Eva:)

We did, afterwards. We did. We both often said: "Maybe he didn't die, maybe he's only hiding." It was all within his character, to suddenly disappear into the Himalayas to start a new life, or something like that. We made up many stories but - we had read the obituaries in the English newspapers. They cremated him and the urn was to be sent to us. Mommy wanted to bury the urn up in the gorge. Although it was against the law we were going to do it anyway. But it didn't work out that way because it was forbidden to import the ashes of a Jew. So this wonderful Captain who later became a friend of ours gave him a ship's burial and sank the urn just off Helgoland. Later he visited us and gave us the ship's map marked with the exact point where the urn was sunk. So, sure, it was just fantasy, when we talked about how maybe he'll suddenly appear. It was romantic. It wasn't real. And then life for Mommy became really hard...