

Vienna, June 99

## CHILDHOOD EVENTS, etc.

I was a dear child, a very dear child, when I came into the world on 29<sup>th</sup> November in Berlin – in a year of crisis full of unemployment and an early cold spell that drove half-dead birds in their hundreds into houses. The ‘dear’ child, claimed my mother, very much to the cost of my older brother; at 8½ ambiguities are not understood. A friend of my mother, the actress Lisl Neumann – later Viertel – had played Cabaret to her for her birthday, and she had made her laugh so much, that I came into the world two days later as a premature birth. It cost an enormous sum for me to enter into the world! The doctor was one of the 3 famous Zondek brothers, who could speak any word backwards at a normal rate: his own secret language! But my mother could afford the Zondek brothers – at the time I was the smallest premature birth ever, that was brought out alive using forceps – for she was rich, in a sea of poverty. Her father who had already died, a Jewish farmer’s son, (yes, even Jews were allowed to work on the land, if the local Bishop allowed it) – in Schweinsfurt an der Ensentz, Kreis Wimpfen, district of Baden – had founded a corn empire in Argentina, which was dissolved soon after his death. Her and her brother Felix’s heart beat fashionably to the left, while Uncle Felix founded an Institute for Social Studies in Frankfurt and later financed the Frankfurt School, my mother appeased her guilty conscience about her wealth, when she married the most avaricious people possible, who again and again freed her of her burden. Of course her first husband was no fortune hunter, but a mining engineer, a Communist, and 20 years older than her: as a 17 year old she ran away with him, at 18 she bore my brother “Fish”. My sick grandfather was dismayed: “My daughter has eloped with a Communist, what should I do?” he asked a friend. “Give him 100,000 Marks, then he will no longer be a Communist”, replied the clever man. Said and done. Forthwith the recipient appeared at the friend’s chancellery, to invest the money.

My mother had already got to know her husband over 14 years, during which her Kaiser loyal father made his Bonn house available as a government hospital. At that time it was swarming with doctors, wounded soldiers, lancers in state uniforms – one of them taught my mother to belch on command – etc. Her first husband was in a wheel chair, had malaria, came from Russia. She also got to know her future husbands Nos. 2 and 3, in the form of my later father, who claimed to be an official of the Communist Party and worked hard to collect money from idealistic brothers and sisters.

My grandmother died when my mother was 7, my grandfather was paralysed, went from bath to bath and was shortly to die in mental derangement: at that time syphilis was not curable. My mother was de facto a product of free upbringing: she was rebellious and intelligent, but her later worship of a most irrational and naked authority, made me particularly unreceptive to ‘progressive’ methods of upbringing.

I do not know when my mother fell in love with my father, to the great sorrow of No. 1, who took solace very soon after, married again and built a house with a round room, that was neither round or not round. During the war he disappeared from the scene and was tracked down by the Red Cross in Westfalen, with a new wife, a white beard and strong National Socialist principles. When my outwardly appearing Semitic brother went to see him, he took to babbling on about ‘racial unity’ with the true ring of conviction, which my brother, who had changed from mechanical engineering to farming, countered with as many tales from his cattle breeding experience.

My mother had a house in Berlin-Wilmersdorf built. She and my father knew God and the world, and celebrated gay festivals: the philosopher Scheeler, Brecht, Brecht's later wife Helene Weigel (a schoolfriend), Zuckmeiers. It was a dress of my mother that Anita Zuckmeier wore to the premiere of "Fröhlichen Weinbergs". The Budapest Quartet played in the winter garden. Dozens of would-be artists lived on my mother's funds: it only cost a dollar a week! My splendid father – later on my mother only called him 'the golden pheasant' – had many, many affairs, which were astounded by and commented on by everyone apart from my mother. When she finally discovered this, she left him, however married him again, ostensibly because I was on the way...When I received his documents upon his death, I saw that it was not true, whoever was on the way, it wasn't me.

My later governess GEGGA arrived in Berlin as a 16 year old from Schlesien. She had had the famous influenza in 1918, her hair fell out and her eyes were weakened. Her hair grew back, but her eyes required strong glasses, which at that time was taboo and lessened any career prospects. She learned to manage a household from an impoverished white Russian, who again and again had to sell off her silver. An empty guest room was rented to a handsome gentleman, who was obviously an artist, and was writing on a PIECE OF WORK. In fact he seldom appeared to be writing, but again and again filled the room with expensive antiques, and he entertained a large number of ladies. He became my father.

An old businessman from Frankfurt, for a time my grandfather's partner, had got to know him in Frankfurt at some time: "He had such a black quiff and every 14 year old was mad about him!" At some time he must have gone to sea: my uncle even claimed to have seen his captain's commission: he was tattooed and could sew. I would not be surprised, if he had become acquainted with the 'dolce vita' as a waiter on a luxury steamer. Her was a gifted amateur graphologist. He had posed as a "Mexican film star" and made a few films, also with Pola Negri. When my mother married, he legalized a Spanish sounding artist name: Fedor Phillip Gonzala (Phillip is presumably real). His numerous admirers believed with him that they had a quite famous anonymous author in front of them, Jack London or Bruno Traven, one with social conscience and left-hand twist. To my knowledge, the name Gonzala existed only in the Operetta "Blue Mask", where he rhymed better with South America than Gonzaga or Gonzales...but he could not speak Spanish and my mother also could not at that time...(the idiotic name precludes in any case that it was Traven, who after several years in Mexico could speak very good Spanish). He loved classical music and old furniture. He moved to Switzerland, when Hitler came, he would once not have been allowed to work there once, if he had wanted to: However, after the second divorce from my mother he received princely income each month: but not for long, since my mother at 33 emigrated to Buenos Aires and in the meantime married husband No. 4, a distant relative who had been born over there, and she had signed over her assets to him in full, so my father had to carry on as if he was writing, living off women. He also made some inventions, and he nearly succeeded in selling them to the government. He brought forth at least one more child into the world, so I had the pleasure at the age of 43 to acquire a 27 year-old younger brother, who is now over 50, lives in Israel and is a drummer and a brilliant graphic artist.

I saw my father, the confidence trickster, for the last time when I was 3 years old, in a hotel with lots of colourful lights. I loved him more than anything, I have never got over the separation.

When my father moved into my mother's grey house, the young Gertud Fix received a post of her own – despite her glasses – that they were all envious of. But she hated the house and the many peculiar characters that hung around on the staircase. My brother was 5 then and with him lived a very similar child, also with blond curls, Wowa Bronsky. His mother, wife of a Russian first age revolutionary, had tried to sell my mother a fur, instead she left her son for 4 or 5 years. So Wowa enjoyed the same upbringing as the Fish, they went to the same stylish resorts to go skiing, stayed in the same splendid hotels, went to the same school. Only Wowa was bitten on the head by Falko, the black sheep dog, when the boys were trying to drag him into their wigwam, and when Fish inadvertently set alight the curtains of the children's room, HE had his ears boxed, which hit home. If strangers asked the children what they like to eat, the boys would shout "caviar", as Father Bronsky often brought it from Russia.

When Wowa was about 10, his mother collected him – her husband had meanwhile been eliminated by Stalin – and both of them moved via Sweden to their promised land of Russia. The boy, proficient in languages, was educated in the best state schools, his mother ended up in jail, when she complained to a police spy and certain shortcomings. Wowa joined the political elite as soon as possible and wassent to bomb wrecked Berlin immediately after the victory over Hitler, in order to govern Germany in the name of Russia. In the course of time he began to believe in God and in Tito. He fled to Yugoslavia, and wrote the pioneering book "The revolution will set free your children". At 30 – looking like a 19 year old student – he lived in the West and was world famous: Wolfgang Leonhardt.

At the age of 52 I met him in Zurich, when my mother tried to master her shattered nerves in a Swiss sanatorium. Gegga and Fish were also there a few months later. Back in Buenos Aires, she took her own life.

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MEMORIES: Daddy, silver-haired, threw a handkerchief over me and said: "Is that a little elephant?". A sister, Lisa, severely dressed, a 'Kilian' with a striped apron. Robert, the Käthe-Kruse doll. I hate female dolls, and anyone who dares to give me one as a present. Otto the chauffeur, who carries me around, transports me in the car at any time, waters the garden, repairs cars...meadows full of flowers Grundlsee, red poppies in the Parisian Park, red lobster at Pruniers, gentian in Ehrwald, small crocuses sparkling in the snow, on Arlberg...A beloved white fur coat, winding roads on mountains, in the elegant hotel, in the revolving doors there, the large window pane...snowflakes, icicles, enormous chimneys in Sestriere, trains, tunnels, 4 violinists in a flooded room, one of the violins touching the floor...Green floor covering in London, orange coloured corridors in the Alvear Hotel...Huge, frightening locomotives puffing black smoke. My mother assuring me: "Iris, don't be cold. Iris, don't be afraid...Pea Princess".

We went to Argentina twice, to Cap Arcona; Maccaroni frocks, flying fish. In between, six months in London: yellow crocuses in Hyde Park, "Walls ice is nice", sweets that taste of soap...

In 1934 we stay: me, my mother, Gegga and Otto, there. Fish stays in England he goes to the posh Harrow School..

We live in the Hotel Alvear in Argentina. A friend of my mother – she looks like a camel – has something for me. Surely it won't be a doll? Fortunately it is not a doll,

but her daughter Eva. Big relief: Eva becomes my most valuable possession: we are both 4 and invited to have strawberries and cream by Mr Pelic, the hotel manager. My mother and later stepfather organize gay children parties in the hotel, in order to attract the high society. He gives me a whole bunch of balloons. One is white: I have never seen such a thing! The waiter asks for a balloon, I think he wants the white one and refuse. I am still sorry today...

We move to an apartment block near the station: an apartment with a balcony. Several rooms, lots of people. The balcony blind is heavy and decapitates the tortoise, which has just eaten some strawberry ice cream. We get a Sky terrier with long grey hair and a centre parting, which barks a lot and hates all Scotch terriers. (The dog is a racist). I share a bedroom with Gegga and have a green playroom. Then an apartment block is built nearby, but in the park instead, we now look into a ravine. Gegga drowns bugs in the lavatory. "(Don't say anything)". The bedsteads are cleaned with paraffin. The noise from the station are trapped in the ravine. Eva too now lives in an apartment, in the street that slopes down to the station. Hills are rare in Buenos Aires, everywhere is as flat as a plank. The park behind her street is also hilly, the bronze statue on horseback of the Argentine hero, San Martin, are in there. Not only did he release Argentina from Spanish rule, but also Chile and Peru. Strange to say, no-one knows about this in Chile, and perhaps also in Peru: My stepfather, who is a Doctor and Chemist, has his surgery in the highest skyscraper, above the monument. He is short, with eyes like fried eggs and a misshapen index finger. He comes from Bahia-Blanca, and has studied in Berlin under Sauerbruch. He speaks with a tenor voice and it is so strong, that he can shout for hours and hours without getting tired! To him all other people are thieves, criminals, deserters, idiots. He gets his operations done by a Hungarian emigrant, Heltai, who should not officially be working, since he would have to repeat all his studies and undertake exams in Spanish. "He is only a butcher", says my stepfather. Heltai also plays the piano, sweetly, properly, like Sandauer later in Vienna. "That is very easy" claims my mother. My stepfather attends to my many illnesses. After a series of painful calcium injections, I get stronger. My stepfather has several patent prescriptions: he treats everything with castor oil, and puts a person on a diet of orange juice. The oil makes me feel sick, the juice gives me a rash every time. For worse illnesses, he bellows for so long, that the person claims that he no longer has any pain. If a person has an accident, he bellows until the person gets up. If the pain does not ease, he may allow X rays to be done after 10 days. He took this attitude once with a broken knee. He does not believe in general anaesthetic, and operates on our appendix using local anaesthetic.

My stepfather earned an enormous lot of money. A lovely 18 year old friend of my mother becomes the lover of the 60 year old President of Argentina, a well-groomed gentleman with the fine name "The just one". Their rendezvous takes place in my stepfather's surgery. The young woman's father is a Croesus. The "just one" is of course married. Argentina is strongly catholic. (Peron was the first to introduce the separation, after he fell out with the Church). I assume that my stepfather blackmailed both sides. The President gives me a "Mary-Lou" doll with bedroom furniture. I shudder at the doll. Nowadays I shudder at Barbies. As a small child I used to shudder at certain tear-jerker songs. I would shudder at Tangos, at Canaro's voice. I am a good hater, and I think people should not think of hate only in a negative way: it has probably saved me from mental illness.

At the age of 16 years my brother travels to Buenos Aires (I am 7). He still speaks no word of Spanish. Within two years he passes all exams at middle school, at 22 he is the first in his uni year to become an electrical engineer. During his time of study, my stepfather played teacher and tested my brother hour after hour, he bellowed and bellowed. He can answer anything he likes, my stepfather blasts him. It never occurs to my mother, to take the side of her children, she cannot get enough of the shouting, should it stop, she incites his rage again. Indeed, I notice that my stepfather demands logical answers and my brother repeatedly leaves out something, even when he knows it. If my brother is not being bellowed at, the doctor bellows at his wife. His daughter...his son...until puberty I was always left in peace, then my parents became active in my education, for two years I experienced hell on earth, at the age of 15 I discovered by chance the magical formula: I bellow back. After that there is peace. My mother fizzles out in front of rage, her favourite toy is broken. I now know: if I lay each word on the weighing scale, in order not to release any avalanche, if I act as if everything is equal, if I am always ready to bellow back, then life goes on. I should really write a lot about art, I am just getting to politics. On the radio a woman is just talking passionately about the War Allies and their not-so-intelligent bombs, about the Allies wishing to dominate everything. She is raging with thirst for peace and self-righteousness!

I do not believe that peaceful solutions are possible under a dictator: Ghandi could only succeed, because he dealt in a regime, which by and large respected laws and human rights, in spite of any opium wars and other transgressions. Under Hitler or Stalin or Milosevitsch, Ghandi would not have survived for one week! Think of the Prague spring, when liberalization came from the communist ranks themselves: think of the students crushed by tanks on the Himmlischer Frieden Square! If I regret something in life, it is that the thought never entered my head to murder my stepfather! I would have spared us so much misery, it would have been worth a couple of years in prison! But I was so good, so well brought up! I even thought I would have found inner peace! It was to happen in a different way.

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It is usual for many Argentinians to go to Uruguay in the summer. There are also Argentinian resorts by the sea, but in Uruguay there is a progressive banking system and lots of sandy beaches, and what is more, the food is better! All night long people make their stately journey over the wide Rio de la Plata. It is as brown as chocolate yet it is clean – it begins with a delta in the province of Buenos Aires, with many channels, weeping willows and chalets on stilts: two huge rivers meet there, which transport the delicate clay from Brazil and Paraguay – then it opens out like a funnel and, as wide as a sea, it pours into the Atlantic.

Even the sleepy capital city of Montevideo has beautiful beaches (now it seems to have just woken up!), the closer they are to the Atlantic, the more beautiful they become. Fine sand, everywhere eucalyptus and stone-pine groves. For years we go to the nice, sleepy ATLANTIDA, where in time I meet many nice children. I try to learn to ride, at that time I could not always do so because of my back. I do gymnastics, I play tennis, everything was catastrophic, not once did I manage to play the piano with 5 fingers positioned naturally! My mother and brother are brilliant at sports, they win all sorts of cups in golf and tennis. In winter both of them went

skiing in Southern Argentina, to Nahuel-Huapi, where the Andes are not so higher and all sorts of glaciers are formed. In order to get there, you had to travel for 36 hours by train through dusty, thorny Patagonia. I am taken along twice, I twist my clumsy legs and leave behind in the snow bath tubs, which I can hardly get out of. I missed the snow so much, in the capital city you never fall.

Meanwhile a summer house is built in the fashionable Punta del Este, where I know no children, where at that time the 13 year olds were not children, but young adults – only I was still a child, small, fat and unhappy. The house being built stinks of piss, it doesn't mean anything to me, my mother; always busy being "creative", angrily dragging me up the sand-dune. When it is ready, the Argentinian President and his lovely young girl friend should have a place to stay.

The house is finished, lawns and trees are planted on the sand, from now on I have to spend 4 months every year there. The lovely girl marries a muscle man, the "just one" dies, presumably from a broken heart.

In 1945 the World War ends, Peron comes into power, and pictures of the concentration camps appear in 'Time & Life'.

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I remember clearly the start of the World War: all the sirens wailed across the big city, again and again, and with a tear-stained face, my governess crashed into the room (1954, when I was in the USA for the first time with the Grossman Academy Chamber Choir, on that very first day in New York the sirens wailed once more,..however it was just a practice...). Apart from that the World War was nothing to me as a child. I know more about a flood when I was 5, since Otto the chauffeur had to carry a fat old lady – yet another doll giver! – pick-a-back into our home, because the water was waist height on the streets. I know more about 2 swarms of locusts that made the sky go dark and rattled against the car windows in incredible numbers. At home they devoured the curtains. My brother scattered 5 of them in my bed, but I was tired and slept on them until they were flattened. I also know more about an endless train of monarch butterflies that flew over a property where Eva, my property, and I were recovering from whooping cough. Eva was a memory and speech phenomenon, she wrote poetry (once I wanted to show that I too could rhyme, and ironed one of her pieces of work a little bit the wrong way: so my cross mother explained to me, it was PLAGIARISM), Eva advised me on all literary things. She was superior in nearly all subjects, I was very proud of her! I was better in music, art and nature, and jealous only once, when it was her who found a pink linen flower! Linen had to be blue, the endless blue fields were then part of the countryside, like the yellow rape today, or sun flowers. Later, Peron pushed the price of linseed cakes so high, that there were no more takers, and the wonderful blue areas came to an end.

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At middle school Eva and I went our separate ways: she went to an English school, I went to the Argentinian state school and did a teaching diploma. Eva studied literature at Oxford, became an interpreter. Later she studied ethnology, spent a few years in Africa, where she produced a dictionary for a jungle tribe, taught at the London Institute for African Studies, married an expert on insects and lived in The Gambia, New Zealand, Argentina, with her principal place of business outside London.

Recently she translated major piece of Argentinian literature into English. We have been friends for more than 60 years! She speaks Russian and French as well.

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At that time it was usual for emigrant children to speak 3 or 4 languages – Hungarian and Russian, and to speak 5 or 6 languages very well. The teachers came to the house. How good my English teacher – an Argentine lady with a floating kidney – was, I only realized in Vienna! There were two state radio stations, on which only first rate records of classical music were played, and the presenters never pronounced any foreign names incorrectly! (Karl Löbel, look out!). I grew up with the noble languages of the Vienna and Berlin opera, and the wonderful English, French, Russian artistes: Caruso, Meyr, Lotte Lehman, Marian Anderson, Conchita Supervia, Lemnitz, Ninon Valsin, Melchior, Tschaljapin. Also the best of operetta, comic opera, Gilbert & Sullivan, Zarzuela, Brazilian folk music. All the greats of the 30s and 40s, crazy about Marcel Prawy, I listened to these every day on the radio. Peron tidied up listening to it, as well! The dictator demanded 50% Argentinian music, later the state broadcasters were more to do with football. In Uruguay SODRE knew how to maintain its standards, to hell with standards in Argentina...What luck, that here in Austria Oe has become more and more interesting, and more and more diverse! My mother taught me to write German when I was 5, and I still write with as many errors today. She was so impatient, that I perceived her words “I will teach you” as a threat. In the end Otto taught me to swim, but not to drive – my mother wanted to do that.

Bridge was her passion, she played day and night, but she never explained any of the rules to me – so I have never learned this either.

## RELIGION

As a child I owned an OLD TESTAMENT, inside it said God should be feared, and that was good. Later the word “feared” disappeared from the biblical repertoire, the Old Testament disappeared too. Now the only command was LOVED, which was difficult. Everything was done to prevent me from learning to be a Jew. I was baptized at the age of 7 – ostensibly because the documents had gone missing. (I did ask: why does God need documents?). Children were prepared for their first communion in religion classes, I was scared of the confession. Nothing was explained about the baptism, everyone was baptized! When the time came (“Don’t say anything at school!”), I thought the prelate would have forgotten the baptism, but did not trust me to remind him about it: therefore I had the privilege of being baptized into a state of mortal sin.

One year later I came to Communion, dressed as a bride, with the other 8 year olds. I had confessed, 3 times even, without the father confessor having taken my onerous sins seriously. The various Ave Marias and Our Fathers had brought absolution by God, but neither by myself or by the Holy Ghost. In addition my veil slipped, I had no memory cards that I could share, and I felt sick during the ceremony, so that I had to be carried into the vestry, even before I could have denied the devil. While the clouds of incense intensified my nausea and the cupola was spinning faster and faster,

a minister recited – no, squeaked, loftily: “this is the happiest day of your life!”(what would the others be like?).

My stepfather always sent me to church: he thought that in this way, no-one would come up with the idea that he was a Jew. He also strongly denied it, it was indeed the only thing that upset him personally. On the other hand, he was too superstitious to be baptized.

At the age of 14 I stopped exerting myself for any ordered faith. Eva, on the other hand – she is a “half-breed” according to Nazi jargon, today still holds fast to her Catholic faith from childhood.

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My mother was not a snob and concealed her Judaism, in order to satisfy her terrible husband, I think. She acted as if she was born in Argentina and forced us to lie about this. She wanted to act \*\*\*autochton everywhere, although she made too many errors in her Spanish to allow her to be accepted. At the same time she scorned those who were well-read and were interested in furniture and politics, the native “cackling geese”, who, shrieking and offering air kisses, only knew 4 topics: Church, Children, Clothes, Staff...she was convinced that there was no anti-Semitism in Argentina, only in Uruguay. (So I was not allowed to invite a friend who appeared to be very Semitic into the summer house). When Uncle Felix sent his sister a pamphlet “Anti-Semitism in Argentina” that he had written himself in the USA, where he was living, the small publication suddenly disappeared. No-one saw it again. She was also convinced that Argentina would never incline towards the power, since the 50% Spanish-Italian mix would be content with corruption. That was certainly the case right up until the end of the first Peron government. Shortly afterwards there was news of a militant secret organization: the “Tacuara” which delighted in setting fire to the bust of Jüdinnen Hakenkreuze. In later years, as we now know, the power escalated to the whole of the subcontinent, first from the left, then from the right. The murders everywhere were relieved of any guilt...(perhaps Pinochet is starting a new era...)

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After his diploma, my brother worked in a factory making gliders and aeroplane parts, which belonged to my stepfather (both men were trained pilots), he stayed true to his makeup, nothing was right, he bellowed about and overruled any order my brother ever gave.

My brother married, having fallen in love like an idiot: his bride was just what my stepfather would have wished: old established German-Argentine family, Aryan, her uncles lawyers, doctors, land owners. His jealousy knew no boundaries, his hatred poured out over the young woman...Only when she lost her first baby did he act as if he portray any interest. At that time they had decided to send me to Europe for a year, in order to study singing: to Vienna, city of ancient culture and cheap prices!

When he gave me the tickets and money, he started to cry: my poor brother would never have any offspring, his wife was now sterile. Tears splashed onto a glass table. It was a strange situation...

She had three children. My stepfather forbade my mother to mention them.--- But now my brother had actually started to everything wrong, to forget everything, and to sleep, sleep, sleep...The devil had succeeded! My brother had lost all sense.



Electric shocks – prohibited today – I believe often wrongly – cured him. In the end he left the factory, turned to agriculture and became an enthusiastic cattle breeder.

Meanwhile my stepfather had endeavoured to make some lucrative connections with the Peron government. He became trustee for the Vice President's assets, the Vice President was a Mafioso type, a double admiral with a young wife... When they came to dine once, she challenged me that I was anything but an admirer of the regime, and invited me the next day to a concert in Colón: the highly esteemed pianist Brailowsky was playing Chopin there.. It was a sell-out, and for Mrs Vice and her friend there was only a widow's box on the ground floor, with that grill in front of our nose that would also allow widows in their time of mourning to visit the theatre. For the woman in politics that wasn't exactly right! She had a luxury box cleared of its occupants, so that we could sit in there: that was the closest contact with power that I ever had. It was so embarrassing for me, that I didn't hear a single note at the concert...

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And now it turned out on a summer's day in Uruguay, that it became known that an American woman from the most famous financial aristocracy was expected, and all the drones were putting their heads together in order to plan how they could get their fangs into this dollar bomb...

The heiress appeared forthwith, with little blue flowers on her glasses and for the most part under the influence of alcohol. She was there to get divorced from a latin American husband, and shortly afterwards he abducted her two children from that park with the famous horseman statue in Buenos Aires, so that I would not be at all surprised, if my stepfather had personally organized the abduction of the children. He then had the opportunity to touchingly attend to the alcoholic, and to pull strings in different departments. He also took her along to companies, introducing her as his wife... And then the unexpected happened: He landed up in jail! Desperate calls to my mother, will she buy him out. If she does this, she says, she will not make a penny more cash available. Both file for divorce. There follows a tedious, dubious, legal battle which ended in my stepfather having to reimburse my mother in instalments, for the assets that can be seized. Before paying the final instalment he kills himself.

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My stepfather smells the morning air, with one of his strokes of genius he can evade the last payment and at the same time prevent his hated stepson from inheriting: he accuses him of having murdered my mother... the fact that at the time of the suicide he was not in the city, is only a small obstacle – the governess could be accused of having carried out the murder for him! He does not even need to appear as the plaintiff: it is sufficient at the time of the inquisition, that he merely poses as an “injured private individual”!

Terrible times follow. Again and again Fish and Gegga are taken away and interrogated.. Fortunately there is a farewell letter!

Then the police come and take them away one last time ---- and they don't come back: in the provincial capital, at that police station, which under the control of the double Admiral, evidence has been falsified, by means of which it was hoped they

could be convicted. Gegga stays in detention for weeks together with suburban prostitutes, who are so nice to her that I have since entertained the greatest sympathy for the “women of the night”.

They were finally freed, on account of proven innocence, not due to lack of evidence, and whether that happened because the defence counsel were correct, or because the judge was bribed, what’s the difference? My stepfather even had to pay Gegga compensation, he did this only a year later, when the peso was only worth a fraction of its value.

During this time I received tear-stained letters from him, with promises but no signature. He never sent any money, the monthly instalments for Vienna lapsed on the day when he had filed for divorce. But he tried to convince me that he had done everything only out of love for me...

I only saw him once more: He appeared at the time when I, shaking and trembling, was doing my Ceramics Diploma – (he had claimed to the porter that he was “my father”) – and walked into the classroom, with the words “Don’t you want anything?” We went round the room, him going forwards and me backwards, and I stammered “No”, sputtering as an overpowering hatred, never noticed until then, rose in me, thick flowing and mustard coloured. He went. In the evening I found a small Sachertorte in front of the door of my rented room.... Over the next 20 years he called me two or three times, never using his family name, just his first name...He really feared that I would record on tape any of his promises! It never happened, since I hung up. -