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Mathilde Glogau, verh. Zissermann: Eine Nachbarin Freuds



Mathilde Zissermann
(Quelle: Katarina Maria Jellinek)

Im Jahr 1906 heiratete die Wiener Jüdin Mathilde Glogau den in Bad Schandau geborenen reichen russischen Landbesitzer Vladimir von Zissermann. Das Ehepaar liess sich in Russland nieder und Mathilde gebar zwischen 1911 und 1917 vier Söhne. Ende Oktober 1918, ein Jahr nach der Oktoberrevolution, floh Mathilde Zisserman aus Sowjetrußland. Sie traf mit ihren vier Kindern in Wien ein und kam bei ihrer Mutter unter. Die Mutter war inzwischen zum zweiten Mal verheiratet, hieß nun Stefanie Mathias und wohnte unter folgender Adresse: Berggasse 19, 1. Stock, Tür 7 - genau über den Freuds.

1922 verliess Mathilde Zissermann mit den beiden jüngsten Söhnen Pavel und Vladimir Oesterreich und liess sich in Harbin in der Mandchurei, etwa 1000 km nördlich von Peking, nieder. Dort existierte eine grosse russische Kolonie, die nach der Oktoberrevolution durch viele Russen, die dem Kommunismus entflohen waren noch anwuchs. Mitte der 20er Jahre lebten mehr als, 150.000 Russen in Harbin. Auch Mathildes Mann, Vladimir von Zissermann, war nach Harbin gegangen, als seine Frau mit den Kindern nach Wien floh.

Die beiden ältesten Söhne Mathilde Zissermanns, Nicholas und Konstantin, ließ sie bei der Grossmutter in Wien zurück. Beide besuchten das Schottengymnasium. Konstantin wurde ein bekannter Leichtathlet und tat sich auch als Autor von Erzählungen hervor. Noch Gymnasiast veröffentlichte er in Wiener Zeitungen seine literarischen Beiträge. Nicholas, der Älteste folgte seiner Mutter Ende der 20er Jahre nach Harbin und heiratete dort eine Russin. Anfang der 50er Jahre verließ Nicholas die Mandchurei, die inzwischen zum kommunistischen China gehörte und emigrierte über mehrere Stationen nach Neuseeland.

Mathilde Zissermann hatte ihren noch in Wien bei seiner Großmutter in der Berggasse lebenden Sohn Konstantin von Zeit zu Zeit besucht und bei einer dieser Gelegenheiten Freud zwei chinesische Figuren mitgebracht. Im Jahre 1936 kehrte sie mit der in Harbin geborenen und inzwischen 13jährigen Tochter Anna¹ nach Wien zurück, in der Absicht, für immer dort zu bleiben. Doch nach dem „Anschluß“ Österreichs an Hitlerdeutschland emigrierte Mathilde mit ihrer Tochter nach London. Dort wohnten sie in Netherhall Gardens, gleich um die Ecke der Freuds, etwa 400 Meter von Maresfield Gardens entfernt.

Ende 1953 schrieb Kurt Eissler an Frau Zisserman, mit der Bitte ihre Erinnerungen an den Kontakt mit Freud aufzuschreiben und ihm zu senden. Trotz ihrer schlechten Augen kam Mathilde dieser Bitte nach. Ihre „Recollections“ in der Library of Congress in Washington gehören zu den eindrucksvollsten Beschreibungen der Persönlichkeit Freuds:

October 1918 I arrived in Vienna with my four small children and two young maidservants, having fled from Russia. My mother lived there in IX. Berggasse 19 on the second floor. The Freuds lived on the first floor. Frau Professor Freud lent us beds, children's furniture and gave us clothing and toys. After a few days I went down to thank her and was received by her and her sister and we took a great liking to each other – our friendship lasted until she died 2 years ago. I mention this because it is, I believe essential to note, that it could run parallel but had absolutely nothing in common with my relations to Prof. Freud himself. In fact the two friendships had nothing in common which is important if one wants to understand the 2 personalities and their family life. I met Anna several times on the staircase and we smiled at each other before once got talking in a bus. She was then about 20, some ten years younger than I was. She was a teacher in one of the Döblinger schools (I believe it was in Döbling) and we often managed to meet on our walks and rides in this direction. Once she said to me that her father would like to meet me and would I come down one of these days and have a tea with him. The name of Freud did not mean anything to me then and I could appreciate the immense influence of his personality the more so be-

¹ Sie wurde bekannt unter dem Namen Anya Berger (1923-2018) und war eine bekannte Autorin und Übersetzerin, u.a. von Schriften Trotskys, Lenins, Marx' und Le Corbusiers (Vgl. *The Guardian*, 14.5.2018, S. 10).

cause it was unexpected. We had tea in Anna's room only the three of us and Anna might not have been there, she never uttered a word but was passive in a friendly way. My first impression of Freud was his generous, warmhearted and simple approach to me and my troubles. He had limitless understanding, the childlike curiosity and the gift to create an atmosphere of equality that made talk possible without any preliminaries and without any conscious restraint. He did not tell me anything special, otherwise I would remember even after so many years – and he did nothing to make me talk, otherwise I would have shed away as I did with others, who tried to come too near me. We simply had very much in common and it gave him and me pleasure to impart our experiences and thoughts to each other. Strangely that I do remember much more of what I said to him, than what he said to me. Mostly about my children. The dangers and excitements they had undergone during our flight and the way they bore it or suffered from it, were an endless source of worry for me and it seemed just as much his concern as mine. After this one long talk at Anna's he sent for me several times, when he had a little time to spare and I came down into his study for a short visit. Anna was never present again. Several times Frau Professor invited me to supper, but then she and I talked to each other in our own way during the meal and Prof. Freud did not say anything and behaved as he did not know me. Only the fact that I was invited to these family meals, which of course would have never happened if he had not approved of me, gave me the assurance that he did not disapprove. In his family he became absorbed, silent and unapproachable. Anna, like me, was part of the "others" then. When his sons were present, his aloofness contained a slight note of disapproval or even contempt, which it did not have, when we ladies were alone with him, but there was never anything said or done to show it. When we were alone he showed me his collection of idols and told me much about it, always in a slightly ironical – or better all it – smiling at himself – way. I don't know how much of it was true and how much was put on in response to the mood I was in after all my experiences. He was always entirely himself and at the same time unconsciously responding to the inmost of the other person.

I don't remember anything of importance he had said to me, but since these meetings with him I have always felt that I had learned something of value and had made it my own and that it has helped me to cope with people and happenings. My memory of him is much more that of a man of letters, a person with an infinite gift of expression and contact with others, than of an academician. He never seemed great to me in any way, never breathtaking or aweinspiring, not even very stimulating. But deeply human, understanding, because he had undergone most feelings and mood himself, and with an immense gift for the right words. I believe that he was not cut out to be a prophet but was grateful to be taken simply at his own value. He had to accept and even exaggerate the cult around his person because he was part of his trade, his trade being to get at people and force them to let him help them, but he put this prestige on like an actor his makeup. The balance of his happy family life rested in the equality his wife was able to maintain not only on the surface but in her quality. His burden was the necessity to play his part and to accept it being overplayed and overplayed, for the sake of his success. The weaker or more dependent he became, the more he had to let his surroundings overplay him and the lonelier and – I would even say – more puzzled he became. I did not see much of him in the following years. I stayed with my sister in Czechoslovakia and came to Vienna only for short visits. I had a glimpse of his becoming more and more tangled up in the atmosphere of adoration when Lou Andreas Salome, who was a friend and patient of his stayed in their house. She needed him in this capacity of prophet and he wanted to help her. I spent a most embarrassing evening with the all. His unability to free himself seemed to me partly generosity partly weakness. It was then that Anna began to take an active part. Only Frau Professor remained always absolutely straightforward and loyal, but remote. With the arrival of Mrs. Burlingham this all was very much accentuated. She appealed enormously to his responsive generosity and her whole accompaniments to his weaknesses. I don't remember when I saw him for the last time, long before that our friendship, which had never had any tangible substance, had faded out.

I had 3 letters from him, one from about 1920 asking me about some details he wanted to know about something I had told him about one of my children – he published this in one of his books at that time and Anna sent me the book, but I have forgotten what it was. One to thank me for my congratulations to his 80th birthday and one to thank me for 2 Chinese idols I brought him in 1938. But I am sorry to say that I have not kept them.

Anecdotally I remember the following: I asked him once if I might send my Russian maid, who had hysterical fits, to him. He said, of course you can send her, but I advise you not to do it – I shall tell you the truth about her and what will you do then? Once I met him on the stairs after having had an amusing half hour of flirtation – nothing more – and being in good spirits: he looked at me, shook his finger and said: Careful, careful my dear, you have so much to lose, – without even stopping on his way. Once he looked at his watch and got up and said: You must go now, it is time for my fools (Ich muss zu meinen Narren). I laughed and said: But you quite like them. "Manchmal wird es mir zu viel", he answered and he sounded very tired.

One more thing I might say – that his personality, his features, his eyes, the sound of his voice remained quite fresh and unaltered in my memory as if I had been in his presence a few hours ago.

Nach dem Tod ihres Mannes Vladimir im Jahre 1957 verliess Mathilde Zissermann London und zog zu ihrem Sohn Nicholas nach Neuseeland. Sie starb 1977 in Dunedin im Alter von 92 Jahren.