



My Monogram

by

Isi Fischer-Sperling, 2001

Text about Jenny Stock, Zikadenweg 51

Mrs. Fischer-Sperling (*1920, †2012) remembered her by the name of Ida Stock



Berlin-Eichkamp, Zikadenweg

I spent my beautiful youth in a Berlin suburb called Eichkamp. In many recollections of my life there are experiences and narratives from the years between 1926 and 1965, which are connected to this suburb. During that period my parents and later on myself were owners of a semidetached settlement house at Zikadenweg 70. My memories are derived from my childhood before 1933, the Nazi-era, mostly the war years and the post-war period. It's a kaleidoscope of extremely colorful pebbles from bright yellow to deep dark black.

Today I took a silver tea spoon from my cupboard ...

Suddenly, a long thread of memories unraveled in front of my eyes, which reached back to the early time of the Eichkamp settlements.

We lived since 1926 in one of the semidetached houses of the settlement near Waldschulallee and Eichkamp Railway Station. The houses were built by the cooperative GEHAG and its chief architect Bruno Taut. In 1928, the architects Max Taut & Hoffmann built for DEWOG the continuation of the settlement along Zikadenweg: on the left side two long town houses and on the right side four duplex houses and some more duplex houses in the side streets.

Most residents of this whole settlement were in good contact with each other, which often evolved in personal friendships. The mothers fought for a new primary school for their children. Middle-age couples made Sunday morning walks to Havel "for health reasons". They collected signatures for the establishment of a grocer's shop. Those were the important activities of the neighborhood ...

Until 1933 the personal contacts could develop well, because many residents - as we would say today - belonged to the "left liberal intellectual circles": Stadtbaurat Wagner, Siegfried Aufhäuser, a leading unionist from the DAG, Rosenberg, initiator of the political Social Democratic Party, upper-secondary school teacher Blankenburg, Dr. Franz Röhn - son of Max Friedländer, a music historian, Max Taut, Arnold Zweig, Elisabeth Langgässer.- and many others. Some of these very dedicated people formed a circle of friends, which met once a month with my parents. My father was an architect and partner of the company "Gebrüder Taut & Hoffmann", my mother a very artistically inclined singing teacher. At these monthly meetings, Professor of philosophy Gutkind lectured. These were followed by tea and biscuits and a lively discussion (if I remember correctly).

In 1933, the Nazi era erupted! Our cultivated surroundings were transformed from day to day in frightening ways. Our neighbor Aufhäuser had to flee. Professor Friedländer, whom we Germans owe much knowledge too about Schubert and Beethoven, had already died in 1932. His wife who - together with Professor Max Planck - had accompanied my mother singing at the piano, emigrated with her son Franz Röhn to the United States. Martin Wagner went to Turkey. The sister of Horst Krüger, later a writer, committed suicide, he himself was later arrested. Arnold Zweig fled. Many others left our settlement.

The monthly meetings in our House also included an older lady named Ida (Jenny) Stock. I still see her in front of me: A small, well-groomed lady. Always well coiffed, elegantly dressed and cheerfully smiling. Very straight and upright walking as little people often do, but slightly limping, she came out of the Max Taut built part of the settlement to our house. My mother told me later that she listened mostly silently during the presentations and discussions. When she asked a question, you realized that she had been thinking a long time - and the circle of those being present, had to think also quite long.

One day – after the beginning of the war - she visited my mother. She told her that she probably would be picked up in the foreseeable future to go to "Theresienstadt". We had not heard this name for the first time. Theresienstadt was an internment camp for Jews. Mrs. Stock had everything prepared and packed for this "journey". Her son lived in England and couldn't do anything for her.

Valuable things such as jewelry and others she had sent him earlier. She wanted to leave her household simply as it was. But there was still a huge suitcase: she wanted to fill it with all the very good bed and household linen, which she had still kept from her parental family. Perhaps it might all be over soon and maybe her son could pick it up if we would be so sweet to keep the suitcase until then. With heavy heart, my mother agreed. Finally, Mrs. Stock gave us a small package in gratitude to my mother for this act of kindness, with the note, perhaps Isi could use this sometime in her own household.

There were six silver teaspoons...

The war was about us across. There was severe roof damage, broken windows and dividing walls, quartering of neighbors, Balts and Russians. The dishes in the kitchen broke completely. Much has been destroyed or even stolen. Nevertheless: the large suitcase was still on our attic - undamaged.

A few years later my mother succeeded to contact the son of Mrs. Stock: his mother has "died" in Theresienstadt! Her house in Eichkamp had survived, the son was able to sell it. (*Jenny Stock was forced to sell the House in 1940. In the context of the so called "reparations" the son could redeem it and then sold it further. Note of the Stumbling Stone Initiative Eichkamp*) He didn't want to get the suitcase back as well as its content. My mother gave those splendid garments to quite a few distressed people of this post-war period and made them happy.

My father died in 1951, my mother continued to live in our house, which slowly was renovated and again habitable. But finally, due to her age, she was so weak, that she decided to give up her beloved house and moved into a retirement home.

So, I sold it in 1965. My dear husband Klaus and I went slowly to break up the household equipments (from sentimental nervousness I cut myself vigorously in the thumb!). And during this work we discovered on the attic the suitcase by Ida. It was so big and heavy that we decided, not to push it down the steep stairs, but to leave it and not mention it when selling the house.

Whether it is there today in 2001 I don't know...

At that time, my husband and I lived in a nice big apartment in Grunewald and moved years later in a 150 year old half- timbered house in Lower Saxony, Germany. Both, we brought just a few old family pieces into our household, as is usually the case after a war. In addition, we were more on "modern style living" set with Asko furnitures and WMF cutlery.

But, some beautiful old objects we kept. From my ancestors an old chest from 1773, a chest of drawers from about 1800, three old tea cups from England and 12 feet cups from 1912 of KPM, the Royal porcelain factory in Berlin, which we had buried one metre deep during the war in the Eichkamp garden.

Yes, and then there are the six silver teaspoons from our Jewish friend Ida (Jenny) Stock. They are engraved with a beautiful monogram: "I. S. ".

In my circle of friends I`m not called "Sigrid", but have always been "Isi" and the last name of my husband Klaus is "Sperling"-- how could it be different, than that on all our new silver cutlery which we bought, the monogram of Ida (Jenny) Stock has been used and will be used in the future.

