

The stumbling blocks for Ernst, Charlotte and Eva Reichenbach were laid on June 16, 2022, and donated by André Graf, Caio Graf, Fernando Reichenbach Graf, Jolin Masche, Ângela Mendes, Matheus Graf, Selma Registro, Silvia Irene Graf, Valdir Registro and the Stolpersteine project funds.

Eva Graf Reichenbach was born on April 3, 1929 in Berlin. She was an only child and lived with her parents Charlotte Reichenbach and Ernst Reichenbach in a spacious apartment in the Grünwald neighborhood.

With the family's financial stability – despite rising antisemitism in Germany – she was able to enjoy a relatively peaceful early childhood. Whether enjoying the snow-covered Berlin winter, building sandcastles during the summer on the dunes in Denmark or playing with her cousins in the garden of her maternal grandparents' country house in Sacrow, Potsdam. (There are Stolpersteine for Arthur Landsberger and his wife Käthe Landsberger at Giesebrechtstraße 7).



Eva vor dem Eingang des Gebäudes in der Egerstraße 12. Bild: Besitz Daniel Graf

The Reichenbachs were a secular Jewish family. Eva remembers rare moments of contact with religion, but when they happened, they were with her mother in visits to the synagogue, which were probably made on more important holidays in the Jewish calendar.

Despite the good situation, the tranquility of her childhood would only be enjoyed for a short time in Berlin, and for her parents the disturbance must have been felt even before 1933. On October 15, 1936, the Reich Ministry of Education banned Jewish teachers from teaching in public schools and on April 9, 1937, the mayor of Berlin orders that public schools not accept Jewish students. Until then, Eva hadn't studied at a Jewish school, so at a certain point, Eva and her non-Jewish friends have been banned from playing together. Even so, Eva says today that she and Martchen – one of her closer friends – did not find sense in the nazi rule, and continued to play together. On November 5, 1938, the Ministry of Education expelled all Jewish children from public schools.

Since the night of the pogrom on 9 November 1938, Eva hadn't seen her father anymore, because he was taken prisoner in the Sachsenhausen camp. The day Eva didn't recognize her father happened in the end of December 1938, when he was unexpectedly released. The release information didn't reach the Reichenbach family at Egerstraße 12 until Ernst himself suddenly knocked on the door, and when he did it, was little Eva who opened it for

him. Being surprised by a skinny, balding homeless man, she reacted to him by slamming the door and running scared into the apartment in search of her mother. Her father was severely debilitated and hardly recognisable.

After Jewish children were banned from school, Eva studied for a short period of time in a Jewish institution, nevertheless, soon she would no longer be in a classroom in Germany, but in a wagon heading for Stockholm, with people she didn't know, to live with strangers who spoke another language. On April 19, 1939, she – like so many other Jewish children – had to say goodbye to her family and her brief life as she knew it, boarding one of the Kindertransport trains.

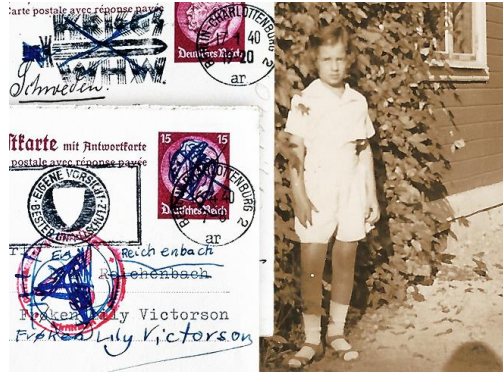
The family Reichenbach and Landsberger was at the train station to bring some sense of security to the situation. Eva says that even at her young age, she had a clear explanation from her father about what was happening and why they had to flee Germany. Not transparent was the place these trains boarded. Strategically planned by the Nazis, a hidden platform at Berlin Friedrichstraße station prevented passers-by to see the farewells; perhaps emotional enough to somehow touch the alienated masses? Who knows, after all, they were also mothers, fathers, grandmothers and grandfathers.

Grandfather Arthur Landsberger was also there, from whom Eva says she inherited his *Berliner Schnauze*, that temperament and ability to grumble – which is so spontaneous and straightly communicated, that often will be so shocking to Brazilian standards of cordiality, the country that little Eva will live one day. During the train trip to Stockholm, Eva wrote a postcard to her father mentioning something her grandfather Arthur had done before her train left: „Lieber Pappi! Wir fahren jetzt über eine Stunde und es ist ziemlich langweilig. Du mußt entschuldigen, daß ich so klaue, aber es schunkelt schrecklich. Opi war auch auf dem Bahnsteig und hat Schokolade mitgebracht. Ich hab´ schon ziemlich viel gegessen. Das meiste besteht aus Schokolade und Bonbons. Grüße auch Omi, Opi, Mammi und dich selbst auch von deinem Würstchen.“

There is saying in Germany about the erratic weather during the transition from winter to spring: „April, April, it does what it wants“. On that April day, the emotions were also vacillating at that train station, and Eva narrates a nerve-racking episode which, as a child, she didn't even realise at the occasion: After saying goodbye at the station, Eva boarded the train, she was in her seat and suddenly, Grandpa Arthur appeared, placing a box of sweets (the one that little Eva mentions in her postcard to her father) on her lap and ran out of the train. Had he forgotten to deliver the chocolates before boarding? Maybe it was a spontaneous idea, or had he planned to be the last one to surprise Eva? The fact is, in this emotional impulse, he could have caused big troubles for Eva, for himself and for the whole family. Family members were expressly prohibited from boarding the carriages, and the Nazis certainly had an exemplary punishment for that. It is very likely that at least Eva would be prevented from continuing her journey to Stockholm. It's not known how Arthur accessed the train, but he did it in secret or against his family's wishes who were also there. It possible that it came to light just because of the Eva's postcard to her father, which accidentally she revealed her grandfather's risky venture. Eva says that when her father found out about that, he was absolutely mad at Arthur.

Eva during her first few months in Stockholm and some of the letters in which her aunts scratched Nazi symbols before giving them to her.

Bild: Besitz Daniel Graf



Eva was only 10 years old, and about this travel, she recalls: “I have never felt so alone in my life”. As she arrived in Stockholm, the new language felt strange, but she was welcomed by the sisters Victorson, three women who lived together in a flat at *Regeringsgatan* street. Adapting for the first few years wasn't easy, mainly because Eva missed her family, felt lonely and had to deal with the language barrier. Even so, she was lucky with her hosts. Elsa, Irene and Lily, who made Eva feel well cared, each one in a different way, whether in rigor with studies, or in relaxed moments, such as baking bread or helping in the garden at their country house. When letters arrived from Germany to her, the sisters scratched out Nazi symbols with a pen before handing them to Eva, an act of solidarity, trying to relieve her from seeing them mixed up with the messages of her loved ones. Among these three women, there was one who was more affectionate, the one that told Eva stories before bedtime, she was Irene, a name that Eva would pass on to her first daughter in 1961. Her puberty and adolescence were spent entirely in Stockholm, there she learns the language and how to ski, and says she was impressed by how people are connected to nature and sports since a very early age.

In those years in Stockholm, it's safe to say that little Eva had to write a lot more postcards than she was used to. On 23 April 1939 she wrote to her mother: „Meine liebe Muzi! Vielen Dank für deine Karte, die eben angekommen ist. Ich habe immer schrecklich viel zu tun, da ich so viel Post bekomme. Das Essen schmeckt mir sehr gut, und ich trinke sehr viel Milch; fast zu allen Mahlzeiten. Gestern hat Fr. Victorson Brot gebacken und ich habe dabei geholfen. (...) Du, Mammi, die Omi hat mir den „Brumbär“ geschickt. Schreibe mir recht bald. ”.

On 6 May 1939 she asks her father about her two birds, and is annoyed with herself for forgetting to pick up a scooter at her friend Martchen's house: „Lieber Pappi, Wie geht es dir? Wie geht es Hänschen und Mätzchen? Grüße bitte meine Kleinen. Wir sind eben mit dem Backen fertig; die Zwiebacke und Zöpfe kommen bald in den Ofen.“. Sag doch bitte Oma Else, sie soll nicht böse sein, daß ich nicht schreibe, aber ich weiß garnicht was. Ich wollte mir doch von Martchen den Roller holen, damit er eingepackt wird; hab's aber verschwitzt. Der schöne Roller. Wer nicht hören will, muß fühlen. 's paßt zwar nicht richtig aber is ja egal. Wenn du mal in der Nähe bist und Martchen siehst grüß sie schön. Die Omi hat den Ring den ich nicht mitnehmen durfte, zertreten auf der Erde gefunden, sie wollte ihn machen lassen, und dann schicken. Geht denn das? Viele, viele Küßchen von deinem Schaeden-Würstchen. Grüße bitte alle.”

In the same year of 1939 her parents took refuge in different countries, Charlotte in England, and her father in Brazil – all the Eva's grandparents remain in Berlin. Since the day Ernst arrived in Brazil, he had tried at all

costs to make it possible for his mother Else and Eva to join him in Brazil. After all, as long as National Socialism existed, no one was really safe in Europe. (There are Stolpersteine for Else Reichenbach and her husband Martin Reichenbach at Duisburger Straße 7). It is not known what has been the response to the visa for Else Reichenbach, because the process at the Brazilian consulate in Berlin has not been concluded before Else's deportation to the Theresienstadt camp in 1942. On the other, on November 13, 1946, the Brazilian consulate in Stockholm issued Eva's permit to stay permanently in Brazil.

The war was already over, letters from Eva's grandparents stopped arriving from the last months of 1942 onwards, and in 1945 the world had seen proof of the existence of the Nazi extermination camps. Eva was about to turn 18 and life (as well her father) demanded a decision about her future. Where to live now? She was more likely to stay in Stockholm than get involved again in another trip to an unknown place, since she was well adapted to the country, culture and people. But her strongest family bond was in Brazil, and so a new farewell was organized. She says goodbye to the "aunts" Victorson, leaving behind another so called "home" by respecting her father's request. In February 1947, Eva crossed the Atlantic on the Annie-Johnson ship – on a voyage that lasted an average of one month – heading the port of Rio de Janeiro, and finally meeting her father after eight years.

**Besuch bei den Victorson-Schwestern (1967): Lily (links), Irene (Mitte) und Elsa (hinter Eva). Unten ist Fernando, Evas Sohn.** Bild: José Roberto Graf



As for the three Swedish ladies, they will still be called "aunties" by Eva, for whom she has a deep gratitude to them directly, but also a general sympathy towards Scandinavian countries, where she could observe a solidarity culture more developed than her last reference in Germany. After reaching Brazil, she keeps the Victorson sisters informed through letters and postcards with many photos and draws about her first impressions of the new continent, specifically the cities of Rio de Janeiro, and São Paulo, the second one, where her father was already established and working.

Living with her father Ernst in São Paulo, in the neighborhood of Brooklin (a neighborhood with particularly many families of German origin), studying Portuguese and taking a secretarial course, she became a multilingual secretary. On December 14, 1951, Eva received her Brazilian naturalization document. By speaking Portuguese

– which she says was much more difficult than Swedish – her social life also happens and she meets her future husband: José Roberto Graf, a Brazilian with German father. Eva married him in 1957 and her father Ernst supported her financially and celebrated his only daughter's wedding with her. With Jose, Eva will form her family: a daughter, a son and many grandchildren.

Eva will forever have an ambiguous relationship with Germany. The place of her mother tongue and emergence in the world and at the same time a place of rupture and disconnection, a place of displacement. Time passes and her life is now in Brazil, but she still maintains some friendships in German and Swedish language. It was possible to hear her often chattering in these languages throughout the rooms of her house with a telephone in her hand. Listening to this mix of languages was an intriguing reference for her children and grandchildren. When Eva was asked about Germany, the answers were quite short, cutting off too much excitement ones could have about the country, any identification through nationalism has become meaningless to her. Clearly, the difficulties and demands of her life experience is closely linked to her strong personality, but that doesn't mean it would be easy to talk and remember about it.

Time also passes in Germany, the post-Holocaust generation deals with his own legacy with compensation policies. Eva, despite being reluctant at first, accepted the invitation from Berlin City Hall to represent the city to citizens persecuted during National Socialism, part of the federal program called *Wiedergutmachung* (Reparation). In 19XX she returns to the city for the first time, reporting actually a positive impression of the experience, surprised by the mentality of the new generation in the country which was driving those policies. After that, visits to Germany became easier, and she returned a few times with her family to take vocation. Traveling became one of Eva's favorite activities, something she learned from her parents. She had been visiting Ernst's home in Switzerland and also her mother Charlotte, at her residence in London, just like the Victorson "aunts" in Stockholm.

Evas 90. Geburtstag im Jahr 2019. Bild: Daniel Graf



Eva still lives in São Paulo, and participated in the placement of these monuments via video call to her grandson Daniel Graf.

Recherche: Daniel Graf und Lilja Fromme  
Text: Daniel Graf

Quellen:

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- Persönliches Archiv