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Muschi

Not long after his return to Berlin in April 1934, Fritz was invited to a party by Ulli Solmssen and his sister Lilli. He accepted the invitation although he had resolved that he would take life more seriously in Germany than he had in America, where his social life had sometimes threatened to get out of control. Arriving at the Solmssen's party, Fritz found the house teeming with young people and as he stood watching the guests he was captivated by an attractive girl walking down the stairs, a young man on each arm. Fritz said that his heart sank when he saw her. He knew at once that all his resolutions for singleminded work would come to naught. He saw, as he later told her, that the girl was 'unique, the only woman I know to whom I can "pray", as I have known since the spring of 1934.'

Despite this instant recognition no particular friendship developed, although it is likely that he encountered the girl again in the following months, for they had more acquaintances in common than just the Solmssens. It was not until the beginning of the new year – 1935 – that he began to know her better. The girl was Anna Maria Petersen. She was to provide more than a distraction to Fritz's serious nature. She could hardly have been more different from him. She was short, reaching only to his shoulder, her blue eyes were deep and full of feeling. She was utterly unintellectual. Her warmth and spontaneity made people who knew her say that to be with her was like warming your hands on a fire. She responded to every situation with her emotions, unpredictably radiating unqualified delight or hor-

ror. Her mother, who adored her, sometimes despaired about her inability to stick to her enthusiasms for more than a second, particularly when she took up and cast aside her boyfriends. She had trained as a kindergarten teacher but, devoted as she was to children, her love of distractions and the fact that the Petersens were not short of money enabled her to take delightful interludes at her family home in Reinbek, a village outside Hamburg, as well as several trips abroad, so that her career never took off. She was undoubtedly spoilt, and loved pleasure, parties and beautiful clothes, but she was compassionate and had a serious desire to seek after more worthy things. As Fritz got to know her better he realized that she had human qualities which did not come naturally to him and which he lacked.

People responded to her because she was a lovable person, not because of her brains or her ability to amuse them. She radiated something which attracted all those who met her and which, as David Astor put it many years later, 'made you feel that you were a nice person after all'. Fritz realized that she was someone from whom he had a lot to learn.

Muschi, as Anna Maria was known to all her friends, came into Fritz's life at a moment when he most needed support and love, when, feeling that all around him the good and the worthwhile was disintegrating, he longed for someone to believe in him and his values. Not that Muschi simplified his life. Her spontaneous and unsystematic approach was totally alien to him and sometimes bewildered him. One minute she would be inviting him to join her on a skiing holiday and the next she would leave him in agony and torment because she had not written to him for a month. Although he had been brought up in a strict and conventional code of manners, Muschi forced him to abandon his natural reserve, and he found himself chastizing her for neglecting him after he had only known her better two or three months, 'Dearest best Muschi, don't be angry with me if I write like this. The normal rules of politeness are really stupid if they cause us to play hide and seek in an area which is difficult enough at the best of times to find one's way through.'

He need not have apologized. Muschi wanted him to be open and demanded that he should be so in a way that was

quite new to him. She was not interested in his mind, which overawed her and made her feel inadequate, but in his person, in his inner life, in the realm of feelings which he kept hidden as much as possible. She wanted a relationship in which there was a real meeting of hearts and souls, and unless Fritz was prepared to admit her into his inner sanctum she was not interested in furthering greater intimacy. This was made quite clear to Fritz from the very beginning of their friendship. He was then very much taken up with his world improvement plan on employment and could talk of little else. 'Iron and steel' was also on his mind because it was a task he had not yet managed to complete. Muschi thought a skiing holiday much more entertaining and, urging Fritz to join her, told him to 'throw your iron and steel into your desk, keep your world improvement plans in your head – or better still out of your head – so that you can give yourself without restraint to the beauty of nature and the enjoyment of sport.'

Fritz's friendship with Muschi was interrupted from time to time by her absences in Hamburg. Their correspondence suggests that although he was drawn to her in a powerful way he did not feel able to cope with the kind of intimacy she demanded. He would retreat into the realms of the mind for which he would be severely reprimanded. Nor was he in the position to consider anything more serious or permanent without any prospects of work on the horizon. A proper occupation was still his first priority. Since he had come to realize that an academic career in Germany would not be possible he had toyed with finding academic work abroad, he had thought of taking a job in journalism and had even considered writing a book, but nothing had come to fruition.

In the autumn of 1934 the possibility had arisen to go into business with some young acquaintances, Muschi's twin brother Gustav among them, but no immediate job had materialized. Professor Schumacher's daily questions about his career plans also increased the pressure on Fritz. He had no proper answers to satisfy his father or himself. Once again his health suffered and his only consolation was that this gave him the excuse to escape from time to time on short holidays where he could at least be alone with his thoughts. By the summer of 1935 little seemed to have improved. Towards the end of July

he went on holiday by the North Sea. Walking along the beach before lunch he was suddenly aware of cries for help and saw a man quite far out thrashing about in a rough sea. Without a thought Fritz went to his aid, although he was not himself a strong swimmer. The drowning man turned out to be very large and by the time Fritz reached him he was already face down in the water, but somehow Fritz managed to drag him towards the beach where help was soon on hand and the man was brought round. Fritz collapsed with exhaustion and was ill for some time with pneumonia, but his act did not go unnoticed. The man he had saved turned out to be an eminent Nazi and Fritz was thanked by the Führer himself, who awarded him Germany's highest medal for bravery. Fritz wore the medal on one occasion only. He was at a formal reception in Berlin where decorations were to be worn. As he stood with his one medal on his breast a man covered in decorations bore down upon him. He fingered Fritz's little ribbon, sneering, 'What is this little thing for?' Fritz was furious. 'My medal is for saving life,' he retorted, 'yours, presumably, are for taking it.'

After recovering from the pneumonia brought on by his act of heroism, Fritz's fortunes began to change. First he was asked by the Ministry of Justice to act as an interpreter at an international conference on prisons. It was only for a week but it turned out to be of immense importance to Fritz some five years later. He was attached to the English delegation amongst whom were Harold Scott and Alexander Paterson, both eminent men in the field of justice and penal institutions. In their week travelling around Germany together the delegates and their interpreter became firm friends and when they parted Fritz knew that he had allies in England should he ever need them.

Then at last the job with which Muschi's brother Gustav was associated and which had first appeared on the horizon in the autumn of 1934, showed signs of becoming a reality. Edith had an admirer, a young lawyer named Werner von Simson. They had met at a party in the diplomatic circles of Berlin while Fritz was still in America, and Werner had been struck at once by her extraordinary beauty and her vivacity. Edith was an artist, excited by every new experience, pressing it into

the consciousness of every available listener. Her enthusiasm has never dimmed: even at the age of sixty-five she could hold forth on such subjects as the virtues of compost for five solid hours without losing her audience. In fact, in some ways she was very like her brother Fritz. Both were utterly convinced of the rightness of their own thinking and unable to comprehend any opposition. The truth to them was crystal-clear, so that they could only conclude that those who failed to see it their way must have some gap in their intellectual make-up.

At this time Werner von Simson tolerated Edith's dogmatism because it served to heighten her colour and increase her beauty. He became a frequent visitor to the Schumacher household and knew the whole family well, apart from Fritz. Werner acted as a kind of substitute big brother to Elisabeth who was still a rather awkward young lady in her teens, very prone to blushing at the slightest provocation. He made quite a sport of her embarrassment: 'Are you wearing your Sunday dress?' he would ask if she appeared in a particularly old dress, knowing that Elisabeth would colour to the roots of her hair.

Werner was working for a group calling themselves the *Syndikat zur Schaffung Zusätzlicher Ausfuhr*, which organized trading arrangements on a barter basis. This had become necessary because Germany's trade had come to a virtual standstill under the guiding hand of Hitler's economic miracle worker, Hjalmar Schacht. Schacht had made a unilateral decision to stop paying Germany's reparation payments and in so doing had also frozen foreign bank accounts held in Germany and put severe restrictions on currency movements. The penalties for illegal currency movements were very harsh, including incarceration in what were to become concentration camps. Thus without the money to pay for goods, trade was made almost impossible.

The *Syndikat zur Schaffung Zusätzlicher Ausfuhr* sought to get over this problem legally by organizing a syndicate of the major industrial firms and export houses in Germany, for whom it set up barter trading arrangements, as a means of releasing their frozen assets in Germany.[1]

Four young men ran the Syndicate, travelling around Europe and beyond arranging bilateral deals in which, for example, German coal was exchanged for Brazilian coffee,

German ships for Norwegian whale oil and German coal for Polish pork. The deals represented big money and the Syndicate earned 1 per cent of every successful transaction. In one year they had already earned enough to finance their annual overheads by the end of the first week in January.

The group interested Fritz very much. It represented an ideal opportunity to study the problems of trade from the inside. Since Oxford he had considered the disruptive effect of reparations payments on Germany's trade a major danger to peace in Europe. It was a subject that drew him more than any other.

Werner von Simson was not initially particularly impressed by Fritz. He thought him rather too full of himself and rather too theoretical. Nevertheless he took him along to the elegant offices in the Pariser Platz, overlooking the Brandenburg Gate, to introduce him to his colleagues. There Fritz met the brain behind the whole scheme, Ludwig Rosenthal, a Jew who was leaving the country because pressure was building up against him, Erwin Schüller, another founder member whose family contacts in the banking world made him a central figure, but whose Jewish background also made him think of leaving, and Gustav Petersen, Muschi's twin brother, who had joined the group via his father who owned the important import/export firm of R. Petersen and Co. The negotiations between Fritz and the *Syndikat* took almost a year before he was finally admitted into their ranks. By that time Rosenthal had left the country and Erwin Schüller was about to leave for a job in London with Lazard Brothers.

Fritz was appalled to witness the growing anti-semitic atmosphere in even the highest circles in Berlin, many of whom were Jewish. He and his friends belonged to a highly sought-after club and there came the day when he witnessed some of its members talking in undertones about the undesirables in their ranks. It became clear that they were talking about Erwin Schüller and that their objections to him were purely racial. Fritz was disgusted at this lack of loyalty to friends and walked out of the club for ever. Shortly afterwards the club announced that its doors were closed to all non-Aryans.

Fritz finally joined the Pariser Platz office in August 1935, with another new recruit, Rüdiger von der Goltz. Fritz was very enthusiastic about his work. He knew that he could learn a

great deal and the busy travelling schedules of the members meant that he was often left alone in the office. He rejoiced at the opportunity that this gave him: 'It is marvellous what this teaches me,' he wrote to his mother, 'I just happen to be lucky to be able to work completely independently.' He also enjoyed the opportunities he had to travel, mainly to Eastern Europe where he successfully concluded the deal to exchange German coal for Polish pork.

Getting to know Muschi Petersen the Christmas before joining the Syndicate had given Fritz another route into the group whose business partnership was firmly cemented by strong friendship. Muschi and Gustav shared a flat in Berlin. Erwin Schüller had been a long-standing friend of the Petersen family and a very close friend of Muschie and Gustav's; Werner von Simson, knew her family well too and was a particular favourite of Muschi's mother. Rüdiger von der Goltz was marrying into a Hamburg family and Muschi's father, Rudolf Petersen, owned one of the key firms in the group, R. Petersen and Company. The group could hardly have been more intimately knit together. They shared many leisure activities, frequented the same parties and spent a considerable amount of time in each other's company. Fritz soon found himself part of the team. When Rüdiger von der Goltz got married in Hamburg, Fritz made one of the speeches and took a major part in writing the script of the entertainment. The office seemed to run the whole show: 'As Simson played the organ and Schüller, of course, organized everything, it became apparent to everyone that an unusual amount of teamwork exists in the Syndicate,' he told his mother. It was a recipe for life-long friendship.

The success of the Syndicate and consequent financial benefits it bestowed on Fritz gave him new freedom. Not only was he earning at last but he was making more money than he was to make ever again while in employment. He could now think seriously about his relationship with Muschi. They made an attractive couple, elegant on the dance floor and off it, both well dressed, particularly since Muschi made sure that Fritz's clothes were of the same high quality as her own. Muschi enjoyed life and Fritz's sense of humour added to their fun and popularity. But Muschi loved his seriousness too and spent hours listening to him, although his constant intellectual tur-

moil took her into realms of thought far beyond her ability to follow or understand.

He thought about the problems of the world in a way that was quite unfamiliar to her. He was irreligious, mocking conventional beliefs, yet he was extraordinarily moral and concerned about the ethical collapse which he saw in German society. His mind, never at rest, probed and theorized, developed plans which put the world to rights at a breathtaking rate. Muschi listened as best she could, understood that he was brilliant, that she was not, and came, in a way, to worship him.

Muschi's impact on Fritz was at first total confusion. Her spontaneous and warm nature was very different from the more formal relationships of his own family, who although devoted to each other, retained a degree of reserve. They were all intellectuals who made contact through the medium of ideas and Fritz was perhaps the most extreme user of this means of communication. Muschi's family lived very differently. On both sides her ancestors came from old patriarchal families of Hamburg. Her father's family had been traders and businessmen, as he now was. They were solid, unintellectual people whose informal lifestyle and friendliness made their Reinbek home a haven for all who came. Muschi's mother was never more happy than when the house was teeming with young people. She had had eight children, six sons and two daughters, of whom Muschi was the elder, and all their friends were welcomed with open arms at all times. Fritz's sister Edith once described her as 'beautiful and radiant like the Queen Mother. One is submerged in the warmth of her look.' When Fritz first went to Reinbek he could not fail to be overwhelmed by the warmth of his reception. But he did not feel entirely at ease. He could not identify with the Petersens' unintellectual approach to life, and their emotional responses. At first he was bewildered. On Christmas Day 1935 he wrote: 'Dearest, best little Muschi, you have always given nobly, and I cannot do more than sometimes tell a few stories – about the office, always about the office. It is only occasionally a holiday with me, as it is when I am with you, but even then work breaks in somewhere . . .' but a few weeks later he had more insight: 'To be separated from you is really hard for me. It seems extraordinary to me but there it is. I could absorb myself in my

work, with my friends and heaven knows what. But somehow I am not complete.'

He sensed that with Muschi's qualities to complement his own, his personality would benefit: 'For me you are like a saint, that will make me into a better person. I believe in that.'

In the May of 1936 Fritz finally took the plunge and asked Muschi to marry him. They were walking arm in arm down the wide avenue which led from the Brandenburg Gate into what is now East Berlin. It is called Unter den Linden. Fritz was, as usual, talking earnestly about some plan or other, some theory with which his mind was grappling. Muschi's concentration began to wander until she became aware that he was looking at her expectantly. She was at a loss for words, not having listened to the drift of his conversation, and Fritz had to repeat, 'Will you marry me?'

They kept their engagement a secret because Muschi had already planned to visit England for three months that summer. Life seemed to lose its point for Fritz when she left at the end of May and her irregular letters compounded his agony, especially as she was obviously enjoying herself. He wrote almost daily, cursing England for removing her from him, until at last she returned, early, at the beginning of August, when their engagement was officially announced.

The announcement produced an avalanche of congratulatory letters from their many friends and relations. Tea parties were arranged so that the two families could meet each other. Muschi's parents were invited to Berlin to take afternoon tea and supper with the Schumacher parents. Muschi was not present so Fritz wrote to her afterwards describing the meeting:

> Now things are not as informal with us as they are with you, preparations are made, wines selected, new tablecloths and napkins laid. In short, from 6 o'clock onwards the whole family was upside down and Papa was pacing up and down like a lion saying that he could not understand what was going on. It was a situation that needed a Mark Twain to describe it ... When the doorbell finally rang at 9 o'clock and Papa and Mama [Petersen] came in beaming, there was an atmosphere of catastrophe. You can imagine what it was like. In spite of all the affectionate friendliness of the newly

> arrived, there was an icy silence and stern expressions. I acted as intermediary between their Majesties, looking at one soothingly, the other encouragingly. After the meal, which had collapsed from overcooking, had been resurrected and appreciated after all, the atmosphere improved and after half an hour had dissolved into the most beautiful harmony. The storm in the tea cup was over. Their Majesties came closer to each other.

The wedding was to be a larger affair than Fritz's more modest taste would have wished and therefore the earliest date that could be agreed upon was October 10th. Fritz did not want to wait so long, not least because there were tax advantages in marrying by 1st September and eventually, despite Muschi's objections to the lack of romance in the suggestion, a compromise was reached. They were married civilly before the end of August, some six weeks before their 'real' wedding. Muschi's father, Rudolf Petersen, supported Fritz over this decision. He appreciated anyone who was careful with money.

The wedding celebrations, which began on October 8th with a grand Polterabend, lasted three days. A local hotel was taken over for the guests, but the party took place in the Petersens' home which, transformed by masses of flowers, accommodated the hundred guests for dinner and dancing. The high point of the Polterabend came when the sketches depicting past events in the couple's life and then a vision of the future were performed by Fritz and Muschi's friends and relations. Muschi was seen coming in in her dressing-gown, barefoot. The kettle was boiling, the bath running and the doorbell ringing. She was oblivious to everything except her pearl necklace which she retrieved from the soap dish. Then Fritz was seen coming in. He was given a towel by Muschi and left to wait. He examined his nails until she returned dressed, put on her shoes which lay untidily in a corner and sat down opposite him. Then Fritz proceeded to give Muschi a learned lecture on the Absolute and the Relative until suddenly from all sides of the stage heads appeared singing, 'Muschi do you understand it, Muschi are you enjoying it?' It was an accurate prediction!

The next day, October 9th, the company assembled again to collect Werner von Simson off the *Cap Arcona* which had just

sailed in from Brazil, where Werner had been doing business. The young people breakfasted on board – consommé, rolls and port – were shown around by the captain and then spent the rest of the day sightseeing around the harbour.

Then it was October 10th, the day of the wedding. It dawned bright and clear, a beautiful autumn day. By 10 o'clock the guests had assembled on the lawn in front of the Reinbek house. A brass band was playing. Below the garden the Reinbek lake stretched into the distance absolutely calm and like a mirror, reflecting the trees around it. Fritz and Muschi stood together arm in arm on the terrace above the lawn, both in black, Muschi with golden jewellery, watching, occasionally exchanging a few words. The village children played under the huge beech trees that framed the lawn, eating the piles of cakes brought to them by Muschi's sister Olga. Suddenly the musicians broke into dance melodies and the atmosphere changed into a village fair, couples dancing on the lawn until midday. The church wedding was not until 5 o'clock so Papa Petersen went to the office for a few hours while the last-minute finishing touches were made to the church and Fritz and Muschi finished their packing.

As they drove to the church it began to drizzle. Muschi, in a long white veil which twirled upward as she walked up the aisle over the underfloor heating, was accompanied by four bridesmaids, Fritz's sisters Edith and Elisabeth, her sister Olga and closest friend Lilli Solmssen. The Minister, Pastor Schroeder, a devout man, knew the couple well and was able to deliver a homily which even Fritz, despite his ridicule of religious matters, could appreciate. He and Muschi had chosen the text together: 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give you: not as the world giveth give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid' (John xiv, 27).

Back in Reinbek the wedding feast was being prepared on long tables covered with roses. Fritz and Muschi were radiant. Even Fritz looked without a care, which was so unusual that his sister Edith made a note of it. Champagne flowed, Hamburg specialities were served and then the speeches began. First Papa Petersen, warm, speaking directly to Muschi, giving her his blessing. Then Papa Schumacher, at first nervous till he warmed to his subject, speaking about the two families, what

they had in common, about Fritz and how he had at first been disappointed when Fritz had given up his academic career but how he was now reconciled to the idea of Fritz as a business man, especially since he had clinched the deal by marrying into a family so successful and well respected in the business world. Then Fritz stood up. With head bowed, speaking very seriously, quietly, and with great dignity ('as Socrates might have spoken at his defence', commented Edith), he thanked his parents-in-law for their daughter. Then the dancing began again. The ladies took roses for their hair and couple after couple led the dancing, the village children watching, faces pressed to the window till at last at 11 o'clock the newly-weds got up to lead the final dance, before leaving for their honeymoon hotel under a shower of rice.

Generally it is appropriate to pass over the next few hours of a married couple's life. Fritz was no ordinary young man and even his honeymoon night was unusual. He and Muschi slept in separate beds. This was not due to a lack of feeling on either side but it showed very clearly how Fritz's mind rather than his heart and his emotions ruled his life. He had observed that in many families the eldest child seemed to have the most difficult character. In some cases he thought it amounted almost to a handicap in life. He concluded that the reason must be that these children were generally conceived when the couple were too excited and inebriated, as they inevitably were on the night of their wedding. It was not a risk he wished to take.

The next morning they rang down for breakfast. They expected something very luxurious. But there were no luscious fruits, eggs or warm crusty rolls that morning. In order to save national resources, Hitler had decreed that certain days should be *Eintopf* days. *Eintopf* is an economical stew made only from leftovers. October 11th was such a day.

On Capri, where they spent their honeymoon, Fritz and Muschi were removed from German politics and its effects on everyday life, but it was less easy to escape their filial obligations. Fritz, relaxing these duties for a brief spell, let a few days pass before writing to his parents. His father could not imagine that the joys of newly married life could provide such a distraction and wrote a typically worried letter asking whether

Fritz's silence was due to any mishap: 'I always have to think of my own honeymoon which belongs to the most ghastly experiences of my life . . .' The letter ended, 'I could hardly get any sleep and felt very unwell. For this reason we left Italy and went to Switzerland to consult a doctor who soon discovered that I had a fever and confined me to bed for nine days. My wife nursed me very well . . .'

After three weeks Fritz and Muschi returned home to begin their married life in a little house in Berlin, which their mothers had prepared for them in their absence. Fritz, who had been happy and relaxed on his honeymoon, immediately lapsed back into the tension produced by the situation in Germany. Although he enjoyed the work of the Syndicate, its very success posed for him a dilemma. It was true that many of their clients were Jews who wanted to leave Germany and much of their work had the effect of releasing resources for their emigration, but nevertheless, the work they were doing was also helping to implement Schacht's economic policy. By its success, the Syndicate was making a contribution to the economic success of the Nazi régime. In working hard for themselves they were working hard for a detestable dictatorship. All four colleagues were united in their disgust of the Nazis and all four had at times discussed the possibility of leaving Germany. They had seen Ludwig Rosenthal leave, then Erwin Schüller. Soon after Fritz joined them, Gustav Petersen left to work abroad, a departure that was also to become permanent.

For some time before his marriage, Fritz had been putting out feelers for jobs abroad. The desolation which he had expressed to Muschi in his letter on the anniversary of his departure from New York was still with him. Although the upturn in the German economy and the comparative quiet in politics had reassured many Germans that Hitler was after all a boon to their country, Fritz remained unconvinced. The general approval confirmed his conclusion that the Germany to which he belonged no longer existed. To be a patriotic German under Hitler was a contradiction in terms. Yet he was a German, felt German and loved Germany. Some of those opposing Hitler argued that it was wrong to leave Germany, that one should stand firm for one's country and fight the evils that had taken over. It was a question which Fritz was to turn over many

times with his friends in the next few years. In his own mind the issue was becoming increasingly clear. The Nazi régime was so well entrenched, so generally accepted and supported that internal opposition was no longer a real possibility. His motto was 'occupy yourself with the things that can be changed.' Change was impossible under the Nazis.

In a memo he wrote a year later (to R. H. Brand) he summed up his view:

> It is true that there is a great deal of criticism in Germany. This criticism, however, refers to very different things for each section of the population, and there is, so far, hardly one single topic on which several sections concentrate their criticism. On the other hand there are a large number of things which meet with the general approval of all sections of the population ... With criticism divided and approval concentrated the régime can at present always count on having the majority behind them on each special issue, and there is no reason to believe that this should change quickly.

He began to conclude that the only possible course of action was to leave the country. The prime responsibility of decent Germans was to survive, to be around when the Nazis' nightmare came to an end so that Germany could be morally rebuilt. To stay in Germany would be to risk either compromise or concentration camp. Yet he did not want to cut off all links with Germany, business or personal. He wanted to continue working for the Syndicate, manning an office abroad, possibly London. He believed that joining the Syndicate had been 'one of the great bits of good fortune' that had happened to him in his life and he did not want to throw it aside lightly.

As so often happens, the opportunity, when it came, was quite unexpected. Fritz and Muschi returned from their honeymoon to a heap of letters bearing international postmarks. Since their engagement not a day had passed without congratulations from somewhere in the world. Fritz went to his post at once. Amongst the good wishes was a letter that began in a different way: 'Lieber Fritz, Pass auf!' Dear Fritz, pay attention, it began. The general director of Unilever, George

Schicht, a member of a wealthy and prominent family in the business and financial circles of Europe, wanted a financial wizard to look after his investments. He had heard of Fritz because the Syndicate had arranged trading deals for Unilever, and wanted to see him. Fritz left for London immediately and within a week informed Muschi that he had decided to take the job. They were to move to London early in the New Year. Muschi was shattered. She was under no illusion that life with Fritz would be quiet and tranquil: a mind like his, forever challenging conventionally accepted ideas was a turmoil in itself. She was content to accept his ideas and to discard her own if he told her to, assuming always that he must know better than she did, but behind her was always the security of her family. When they had discussed their future in terms of the future of Germany before their marriage, she knew that Fritz was seriously considering leaving Germany, so much so that while she was in London she had written to him specifically about living in England: 'I would find it very nice but I fear that you would fit into England too well for my liking. I am very little like the English although I like the customs very much.' She also knew that it would be difficult when the time came to make the decision, but she was completely unprepared for it to be so soon. There would be no time to put down roots in Berlin and draw Fritz closer into her family circle in Reinbek. It was like the shattering of a dream.

The news of their imminent departure was no less of a bombshell to both sets of parents. Muschi's father was furious. He too had his dreams about his partnership with his gifted son-in-law and was not going to let go of them so quickly. The atmosphere between them immediately darkened. Muschi's mother was more concerned with Muschi's own happiness. Fritz's parents took similar positions, the Professor distraught at yet another change in his son's career when he had only just come to terms with the last change and Fritz's mother sad to lose her son abroad again and to witness the intensification of the tension between father and son. Neither set of parents understood the real issue: that Fritz felt he had to leave Germany because of the evil presence of Hitler. Fritz was already certain that Hitler's policies would inevitably lead to war. In the next year both parents came to believe this too, but it did

not occur to them that Fritz would not fight for Germany in such a war. For them it would become a question of the defence of the Fatherland, irrespective of Hitler. They could not understand that for Fritz the Fatherland no longer existed; and that he believed it could not exist again until the blight of Hitler had been removed, that to him fighting for the Fatherland would mean fighting against the Germany defiled by Hitler. Muschi too was sometimes to find this paradox hard to understand and Fritz had to remind her even days before the war did indeed break out:

> Political theories, lessons, methods, successes or failures do not interest us do they? Instead we are interested solely and exclusively in moral obligations, unfettered by boundaries, whether national, racial, occupational, religious or anything else. The development of a person towards good consists largely in a continuous broadening of the boundaries of his moral responsibility, that he conquers the moral indifference by which prejudice limits his boundaries until he realizes what appears to be a higher purpose in his living and thinking, namely that he regards all men 'as equal before God'. Whoever imposes a moral 'charter' on other nations, races, groups, or individuals will find their inner life eroded and will go to the dogs.

He was reminding Muschi that their stand was based on an obligation to the truth and to freedom. She was torn between the pressure from her parents to stay in Germany and the high ideals of her husband. Her heart drew her to Germany but it also told her to stand by Fritz, that he was on the side of right even if it was a side that would cause her great pain to support.

In early 1937 when she joined Fritz in London all these emotions and split loyalties already gnawed at her happiness. She was stepping into the unknown, into a hostile country where she had no home, where she would be alone while her husband was at work. She had already remarked on his greater affinity with England than her own, an opinion echoing an earlier comment by Werner Brückmann who had recorded in

his American diary: 'Fritz was a Berliner, but in his way he was also an Englishman. One could describe his manner and appearance as Prusso-English. A tall thin figure with a Berliner's face but an English posture.'[2]