

The story started like a fairy tale:

Once upon a time, a little girl, accompanied by a lad, her elder cousin, went through the forest to visit their great-grandmother, who, more than 100 years old and blind, lived in the next village. In that forest she found a coin knotted into a handkerchief. When picking up this money her cousin warned her she should better leave it where it was as this is the devil's money. Ignoring her cousin's advice she kept the money and, arriving at the village, spent it on some candies which she ate all by herself without offering any to her other cousin who lived with their great-grandmother and who has given her a lovely welcoming present. The two girls started a quarrel upon which the great-grandmother who felt disturbed by the noise stated that the girl who has eaten the sweets bought from that devil's money actually has swallowed the devil who is now within her body and who would no more leave her ever – she actually execrated her. And so it was, the very next the devil made his presence known in the environment of the girl, throwing stuff around and particularly after her. Stones were thrown against and into the house from the outside, and objects in her vicinity were moved and thrown: they jumped, and 'flew' through the air. Soon, she was sent back to her home village, with the only result that the phenomena continued there after a short break of three days. At a later stage, things developed to the 'devil' even scratching her face and spitting at her – no wonder that she subsequently was called 'the devil's girl'.

The name of that little girl, not yet twelve years of age at the onset of the strange occurrences, was Eleonore Zugun, the above event took place early in February, 1925, and the village she came from was Talpa, located in a rural and remote area of Romania (that remote suffice to mention that she got her first pair of shoes only when she later was transferred to Vienna in the course of the investigation of her case by Countess Wassilko).

As it happens time and again with strange and apparently inexplicable phenomena, they puzzled the immediate witnesses who informed their friends and relatives, the case eventually came to the knowledge of the local press, later to the one of the regional newspapers, and ultimately to media that were read nation-wide. Eventually, the news of a new case of ostensibly poltergeist-like phenomena was widely spread within the circles interested in the study of such phenomena, a German scientist by the name of Fritz Grunewald was dispatched to the scene and reported on what he had witnessed. By coincidence, he died suddenly shortly after his return from that journey.

Enter Zoë, Countess Wassilko-Serecki. The Wassilko family comes from the Bukowina which was during the Austro-Hungarian monarchy the easternmost province of the Hapsburg Empire. It was only in 1900 that the Countess' father, Stephan, moved with his family to the Empire's metropolis, Vienna, as he was the 2nd son and as such had no claim to inherit the vast family properties, thus he was forced to pursue a career on his own which he did as a high-ranking official of the administration. Nonetheless the ties to the old homeland have never been severed despite Austria's territorial losses following her defeat in World War I, and now, when Countess Zoë who, thirty years of age at that time, had a long-standing interest in psychical phenomena learned about a poltergeist case actually taking place on 'their own' territory she felt very excited. So, after Grunewald's death she visited

Talpa to get a first-hand impression of Eleonore and her phenomena, and finally resolved to invite the girl to Vienna in order to study her phenomena thoroughly.

Eventually, on January 29th, 1926, Eleonore Zugun arrived to Vienna, accompanied by Kubi Klein, the journalist who had 'discovered' her.

Already on the very following day the first phenomenon is reported to have happened: the maid allegedly saw a silver spoon falling down from the table by itself.

From then on, the Countess recorded each and every phenomenon, firstly in her hand-written logbooks, vol. I - III, totalling 141 pages. Whereas locomotion of small objects was in the foreground for half a year the phenomena then gradually shifted to the 'dermal phenomena' i. e. scratches and bites on her skin and spitting, thus there have been two clearly distinct phases. By the end of September, 1926, the Countess, together with Eleonore, started a 'tour' of some five months' duration, visiting the leading parapsychologists of that time, covering London, Berlin, Nuremberg, and Munich, during which time the log files were kept by different witnesses. At the end of this journey the movie recording her dermographic phenomena was taken. A total in excess of three thousand phenomena was recorded out of which nearly nine hundred are very well documented. Nonetheless, allegations of fraud have been raised and a so-called exposure (rather a pseudo-exposure) has taken place like in each and every other case of 'physical mediumism' where 'believers' and 'sceptics' clash violently with one another and an endless discussion between the two camps ensues.

And the end of that story that started like a fairy tale?

Within two days following their return to Vienna, Eleonore had her menarche after which her phenomena quickly became scattered and soon disappeared totally. As her mediumship drove to a close, the Countess had her to learn a trade by which she could later support herself once back home. So, she found a place in a ladies' hairdressing saloon where she also learned manicure. It appears that this was a quiet and uneventful period for her, lasting for approximately one more year she spent in Vienna before returning to Romania and starting work there at a fashionable hairdresser's in Czernowitz.