

# Leaving Today: the Freuds in Exile 1938



FREUD MUSEUM  
LONDON

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# Leaving Today: the Freuds in Exile 1938

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Exhibition catalogue

Curator  
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Sigmund Freud after his arrival in London,  
6 June 1938.

# Foreword

by Carol Seigel, Director

On the Freud Museum's 25th anniversary, the Austrian Ambassador spoke movingly: '*I deeply admire the work of the Freud Museum, but I bitterly regret the reason for its existence.*' The Freud Museum in London exists because Sigmund Freud, his daughter Anna, and their family, like so many others, were forced to flee the Nazis and start new lives in strange countries far from home.

Sigmund Freud was probably the best known, but many Jewish refugees settled in and around Hampstead before and after the Second World War. Many, like Anna Freud, immediately began to pick up the threads of the life they had created before their departure. Anna's work with children traumatised by war, including children rescued from concentration camps - in which members of her own family perished - had a lasting impact on the development of child analysis in Britain.

The Freud Museum opened in 1986 following Anna Freud's death, and at her wish. 20 Maresfield Gardens houses Sigmund Freud's collection of antiquities, his library, his desk, and the iconic, original psychoanalytic couch. Unlike many refugees then or now, the Freuds were fortunate in being able to bring many of their possessions with them. The house symbolizes the continuation of ideas which the Nazis wanted to destroy, and the rescue of psychoanalysis from the attempts to wipe it out in central Europe.

The exhibition *Leaving Today: the Freuds in Exile 1938* has a more personal narrative. Created to mark eighty years since the Freud family left Vienna, it tells the story through the family's eyes - the story that is still too common today - of being uprooted, of leaving all that is familiar, of coming to terms with loss and fear and the challenges of new beginnings. The exhibition is poignantly illustrated by material from the Museum's archive and collections, some of which has not been on public display before.

20 Maresfield Gardens now houses a thriving museum open to visitors from around the world, as well as successful public, exhibition, learning and research programmes. Yet the story outlined in this catalogue, and the accompanying exhibition, explains why the Freud Museum in London exists at all.

Freud Museum London  
July 2018

# The Unspeakable & the Unspoken

by Michael Molnar

"Leaving today," Freud wrote on a postcard to a friend, the German writer Arnold Zweig, on 4th June 1938. Another note sent at the same time said, in English: "Leaving Vienna for good today." On that day his and his family's lives changed "for good" – they became refugees.

In Freud's note diary the event is simply recorded without comment: "Departure 3.25 Orient Express". The notes go on to record the subsequent stages of the journey – crossing the German frontier at the Kehl bridge; a stopover to visit a friend, the psychoanalyst Princess Marie Bonaparte, in Paris; the Channel crossing; arrival in London – all of this without commentary or opinion.

The reason is that these sporadic daily notes that Freud kept from 1929 up to his death in 1939 (he called them, his "Shortest Chronicle") were little more than reminders to jog the writer's memory – something between a logbook and an appointments diary. This record is made up largely of names and nouns. They neither emote nor plead; they simply bear witness.

The refugee has to adapt to a new identity and a strange language.

Only five days after his arrival in England Freud wrote to a colleague of the emigrant's pain at "the loss of the language in which one lived and thought..." Freud's English was nearly perfect. Yet his sense of identity was rooted in the German language. In English he knew he could never be entirely himself.

To say a situation is "unspeakable" is a figure of speech. (Referring to a totalitarian system it can also be literally true – one is simply not allowed to speak.) To say it is "indescribable" is to acknowledge that language can be defeated.

It was less than a day after Freud sent Zweig's postcard (the diary meticulously records the exact moment – 3.45 a.m.) when the family crossed the German border. After five years under an Austro-Fascist regime and twelve weeks of Nazi rule. Freud would finally be able to speak and publish again as he pleased.

Once in England he was soon approached by editors for his opinions. An article, claiming to be the first from his pen since his emigration, was published in Arthur Koestler's journal, *Die Zukunft*, in November 1938. Entitled "A Comment on Anti-Semitism," it is a curious production for it is almost entirely composed of a long précis, claiming to be a loose quotation from an author whose name Freud says he has forgotten.

Why this ventriloquism? It is not as if Freud himself had nothing to say on the subject. For most of the 1930s he had been working on his own response to the topic: the diary records that he resumed work on it in England only a couple of weeks after his arrival, and it would finally be published in February 1939 as *Moses and Monotheism*. So why did he choose not to speak out himself? Or – since Ernest Jones believed the "forgotten" author was actually Freud – why did he choose to disguise his voice?

The answer is provided by another article published in November 1938, a letter to the editor of *Time and Tide*. It is the last of his articles in the Standard Edition of his work, where it is entitled "Anti-Semitism in England." The editor had requested his contribution to a special number of the journal, to be devoted to antisemitism. In his letter Freud responded by curtly listing some of the wrongs he had suffered (driven from his life-long home, psychoanalytic institutions destroyed, their publications pulped, his children deprived of their professions), and suggested to the editor that someone less personally involved, and a non-Jew, would be fitter to speak on that topic. He then quotes a French dictum: – fools make a fuss; the wronged honest man departs in silence.

To be a victim of injustice is to be diminished as a person, to be deprived of agency – except for one's voice. Why then does Freud feel that the victim should voluntarily forfeit the right to speak, and concede it to some unaffected defendant?

The French saying he quotes seems to point to pride and self-respect as the key factor: the wronged man should not be reduced to the humiliation of pleading a self-evident cause. That presupposes a state under a just government. By refusing to speak in his own defence, he was explicitly appealing to the forces in English society that defend the dignity of the individual.

When Freud sent that postcard notifying his departure, Arnold Zweig, its recipient, was living in Palestine, and had already been an emigrant for five years. In effect it was Freud who had saved his life in 1933, when he had dissuaded Zweig from returning to Germany, to certain incarceration, and probable death. Having read the signs accurately on behalf of his friend, it could be asked why he did not in turn follow the advice of friends, or read the signs better on his own behalf. Why did he wait till after the long-anticipated *Anschluss* (annexation) of Austria?

In that respect he was no different from thousands of other Austrian Jews and opponents of Nazism, in believing that the 1930s Austro-Fascist regime of Dollfuss and Schuschnigg, coupled with the influence of the Catholic Church, would function as a sort of cowpox, the vaccine of a mild illness against the raging epidemic next door. Like many others he also had a sentimental faith in Austrian *Schlamperei* (slovenly incompetence), believing it would mitigate the effects of German order and orders.

There were private reasons, too, for his failure to leave before the trap shut on them. (His own gruesome analogy – after it snapped shut, they were, he said, like a fox in a trap that chews off its own leg to escape.) Apart from the inertia of old age, there was also his terminal cancer, the sickness that made him reliant on almost daily medical treatment. And, apart from all these pretexts and reasons, there was that more elusive factor, self-respect (or stubbornness?). Why should he flee those he despised?

We are looking down from the grandstand of hindsight. The accuracy of foresight depends on which of the signs you choose to read. The first page of *Mein Kampf* announced: "People of the same blood should be in the same Reich". But who read *Mein Kampf*? or, if having read it only the first page took it seriously?



▶ Door to Freud's practice,  
Berggasse 19, Vienna,  
Edmund Engelman, May 1938.

◀ Sitting room corner,  
Berggasse 19, Vienna,  
Edmund Engelman, May 1938.



13 May 1933	Burning in Berlin
25 March 1936	Confiscation of our books at Leipzig
13 March 1938	<i>Anschluss</i> with Germany
15 March 1938	Search of press and house
22 March 1938	Anna with Gestapo
28 March 1938	Acceptance by England assured. Ernstl in Paris. Emigration appears possible
5 May 1938	Minna emigrated. Negotiations with Gestapo
10 May 1938	Emigration within a fortnight?
14 May 1938	Martin left
24 May 1938	Mathilde and Robert departed
2 June 1938	Declaration of no impediment
3 June 1938*	Departure 3h 25. Orient Express – 3 ¼ am. Kehl bridge
4 June 1938*	Paris 10h, met by Marie Ernst, Bullitt. In the evening to London
5 June 1938*	New house. Minna seriously ill. Columns in newspapers
9 June 1938	Sam from Manchester
7 and 8 August 1938	Things arrived
10 November 1938	Pogroms in Germany
6 December 1938	Lun back
31 January 1939	Bone ache
28 February 1939	Trial excision & X-ray
13 March 1939	Moses with Lange
6 June 1939	One year in England
25 August 1939	Eva to Nice. Dorothy to New York. War panic
23 September 1939	Freud's death

▼ \* Freud mistook the dates for these entries.

With the exception of the final entry noting Freud's death, the events on this time line have been translated directly from Freud's entries in his "*Kurzeste Chronik*" ("Shortest Chronicle").

## 'Finis Austriae': The *Anschluss* and Freud's decision to leave

Freud's decision to leave Vienna was slow and painful. He had watched with alarm as Hitler's persecution of German Jews after 1933 became increasingly brutal, and as his sons, Ernst and Oliver, had been forced to leave Germany with their families.

Friends abroad urged Freud to flee but his chronic illness, lack of mobility and the difficulties of life in another country weighed against it. Furthermore, anti-Semitism was a reality for Jews in Vienna and like all Viennese Jews, Freud had encountered it throughout his life.

As German troops crossed Austria's border ready for the *Anschluss*, the country Freud had known seemed to disappear overnight. Jews were assaulted and publicly humiliated, and their property attacked. Restrictive laws against them intensified and hundreds were arrested and deported. In his diary, Freud wrote the Latin words '*Finis Austriae*,' 'the end of Austria.' Anna was young, and for her sake Freud finally agreed to leave.

*"... and if you assume life in oppression to be amply uncomfortable for us Jews, then don't forget how little contentment life promises refugees in a foreign country ..."*

Letter from Freud to Sándor Ferenczi, 2 April 1933.





Nazi officials in Vienna, Spring 1938.

“The feeling of triumph on being liberated is too strongly mixed with sorrow, for in spite of everything I still greatly loved the prison from which I have been released.”

Letter from Freud to Max Eitingon, 6 June 1938.

*“Anna will certainly find it easy to manage, and this is the main thing, because for us old people between seventy-three and eighty-two the whole undertaking would have made no sense.”*

Letter from Freud to Ernst Freud, 12 May 1938.





▶ Paula Fichtl's travel case, c. 1930s  
This case holds a set of toilet products and grooming equipment including bath salts, hand lotion, boric acid (a mild disinfectant), mirror, toothbrushes and manicure tools.

▶ Selection of press cuttings, 1938  
Newspapers across the globe reported Freud's escape from Vienna and his arrival in London. Titles featured in this montage include *Daily Herald*, London, *Sozialdemokrat*, Prague, and *Courier*, Geneva.



▶ Terracotta figure  
When Freud and his party broke their journey with Marie Bonaparte, she gave him a group of terracotta figures, including this statuette of a woman. In London, Freud arranged these on his desk whilst he waited for his collection to arrive.



Embroidered wall-hanging, c. 1883

Martha made this wall-hanging at Freud's request during their engagement. It is embroidered with the words "En cas de doute abstiens-toi" ("if in doubt, abstain") and Freud fixed it to his bulletin board in his hospital lodgings in Vienna.



Hannukah lamp, Northern France or Germany, 13th century

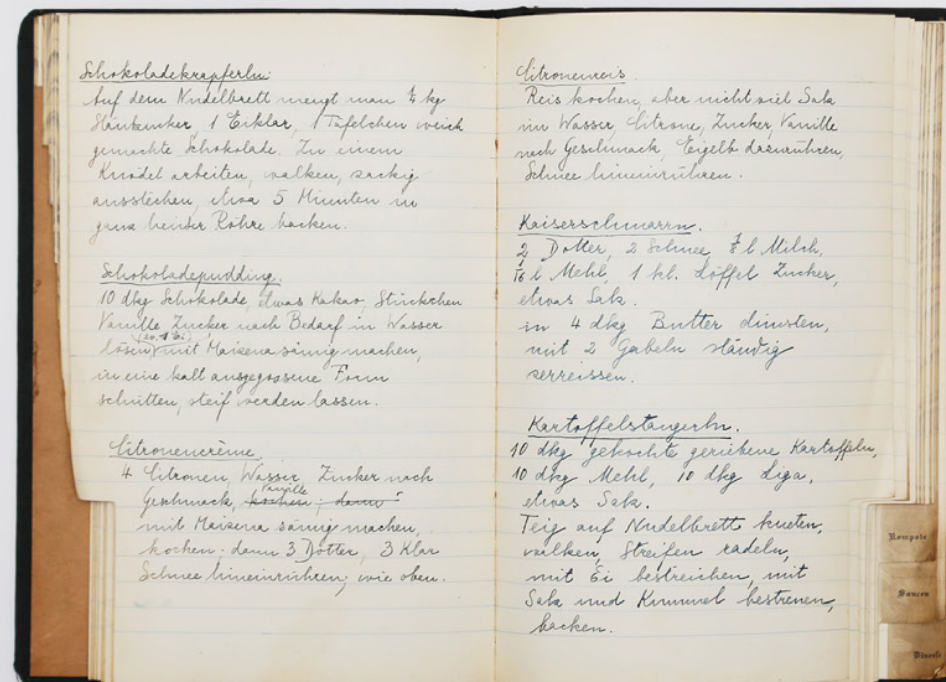
The Hebrew inscription on this lamp in Freud's collection quotes the biblical passage "For the commandment is a lamp, and the teaching is light." It was made to use on the Jewish festival of *Hannukah* (Festival of Lights). Although Freud always identified as Jewish, he was an atheist - a "godless Jew" - and it is unlikely that the family ever used it.

Jewellery box, 1882

A pencil inscription in Freud's hand is visible on the lid of this box: "To Marthchen on your 21st birthday from a poor, happy man". The box is from Hamburg jeweller, A. Böttger, but it is not known what jewellery it held. It was found in 2014 inside the trunk that Anna Freud returned to Berggasse 19 in the 1970s.



Lent by the Sigmund Freud Foundation.



Recipe book, c. 1925 - 1970

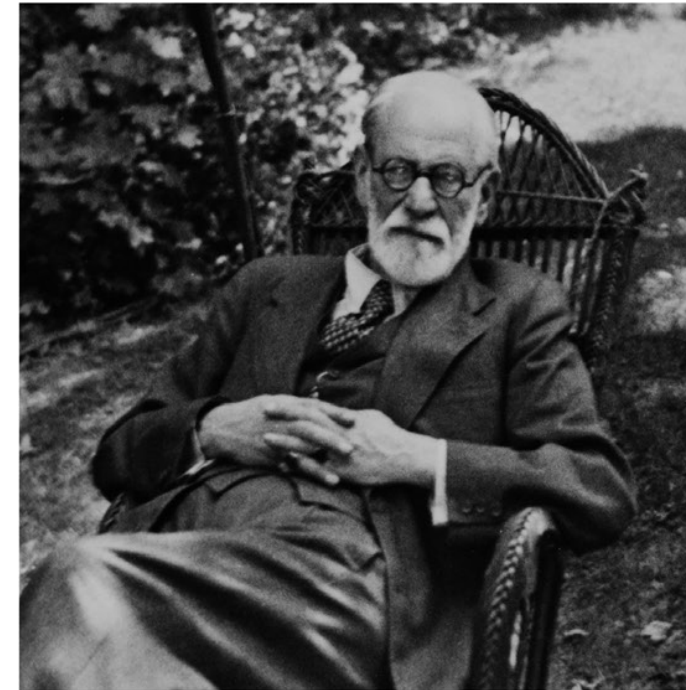
Anna's recipe book from Vienna contains very few savoury recipes. The *mehlspeisen* (pastries) section, however, is full of traditional Viennese sweets like *schokoladekrapferln* (chocolate cookies), *citronereis* (lemon rice) and *Kaiserschmarrn* (Austrian pancakes).



Silver-plated knife, fork and spoon, c. 1890-1920

These items of cutlery were also brought to London. Made in Germany by the company, ONK, they are engraved with the initials 'MB', almost certainly standing for 'Minna (not Martha) Bernays'.

According to a telegram from the American Embassy in Vienna to the U.S. State Department, dated 19 March 1938, Freud wished "to take with him his family of ten, including three in laws, maid, physician, latter's family of three, sixteen in total." The following individuals were amongst the 16 listed in the telegram. The following pages show documents and possessions belonging to them.



Sigmund Freud in the garden of the family's summer villa at Grinzing, 1930s.

## Sigmund Freud

(1856-1939)

When Freud escaped from Vienna, he brought with him what Martin Freud described as "a kind of unbound diary in the form of large sheets of white paper upon which he recorded in a most laconic way those events of the day that seemed to him of importance". At the heart of this diary - which Freud headed "Kurzeste Chronik" ("Shortest Chronicle") - is his family: their arrivals and departures, their birthdays, their illnesses. Each entry signifies their importance to him and, from 6 June 1938, the importance of their presence with him in exile.



Martha Freud on Sigmund's 70th birthday, 6 May 1926.

## Martha Freud

(1861-1951)

In Vienna Martha's role of running the household and bringing up their six children had given Freud the freedom to pursue his work. She adapted well to life in London where she continued to care for Freud and the house, receive guests and family, and in spare moments, read or sew with her sister, Minna. Her dignified response to the group of S.A. men who raided the Freuds' apartment on 15 March 1938 reveals some of her strength and resilience. After Freud's death, she remained in charge of the house and garden until she was almost 90.



## Members of the Freud family who escaped from Germany and Vienna, 1933 – 1938

- Oliver Freud (1891-1961) CG
- Henny Freud (née Fuchs) (1892-1971) IG
- Eva Freud (1924 – 1944) GG
- Ernst Freud (1892 - 1970) CG
- Lucie (Lux) Freud (née Brasch) (1896 – 1989) IG
- Stefan Gabriel Freud (1921- 2015) GG
- Lucian Michael Freud (1922 – 2011) GG
- Clemens Raphael Freud (1924 – 2009) GG
- Max Halberstadt (1882 – 1940) IV
- Ernst W. (Ernstl) Halberstadt (1914 - 2008) GG and GV\*
- Alexander Freud (1866 – 1943) SV
- Sophie Freud (née Schreiber) (1878 – 1970) IV
- Harry Freud (1909 – 1968) GV
- Minna Bernays (1865-1941) SV
- Ernestine (Esti) Freud (née Drucker) (1896 – 1980) IG
- Anton Walter Freud (1921 – 2004) GV
- Sophie Freud (born 1924) GV
- Jean-Martin Freud (1889 – 1967) CV
- Mathilde Hollitscher (née Freud (1887 - 1978) CV
- Robert Hollitscher (1875-1959) IV
- Sigmund Freud (1856 – 1939)
- Martha Freud (1861 - 1951)
- Anna Freud (1895 – 1982) CV
- Sophie Halberstadt (née Freud) (1893 – 1920)
- Dorothy Burlingham (1891-1979)

## Members of the Freud family who remained in Vienna

- Rosa Graf (née Freud) (Born 1860. Deported from Vienna 1942)
- Marie (Mitzi) Freud (Born 1861. Deported from Vienna 1942)
- Adolfine (Dolfi) Freud (1862 – 1942)
- Regine Pauline (Pauli) Winternitz (née Freud) (Born 1864. Deported from Vienna 1942)
- Paula Fichtl (1902- 1989)

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