

**ORGANIZED ESCAPE – SURVIVAL IN EXILE
VIENNESE PSYCHOANALYSIS 1938 AND BEYOND**

Special exhibition at the Sigmund Freud Museum
November 12, 2021 to April 30, 2022

The exhibition ORGANIZED ESCAPE – SURVIVAL IN EXILE. VIENNESE PSYCHOANALYSIS 1938 AND BEYOND, which opens on November 12, 2021, will portray the fates of the – mostly Jewish – psychoanalysts who had to leave Vienna after the “Anschluss”, the annexation of Austria into National Socialist Germany. The majority of members and candidates of the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society (Wiener Psychoanalytische Vereinigung, WPV) were able to flee with the help of the international psychoanalytic networks. These connections also contributed to sustain and further disseminate Viennese psychoanalysis in the diaspora.

A total of 38 of the 43 members still living in Vienna in March 1938 were affected by the antisemitic Nuremberg Laws and forced to flee; in addition, there were candidates (psychoanalysts in training) whose number cannot be firmly established due to missing data. The vast majority of members and candidates emigrated to the United States. A particularity of this escape is the fact that this emigration was organized collectively, and was successful but for a few exceptions. The members who had thus escaped being murdered substantially contributed to the development and global dissemination of psychoanalysis in their exile. Using selected biographies, interviews, maps, and historical documents, the exhibition shows this geographical expansion along escape routes and final destinations as well as bureaucratic and organizational efforts.

The presentation was developed in cooperation with the “Working Group on the History of Psychoanalysis” (Thomas Aichhorn, Georg Augusta, Eva Kohout, Roman Krivanek, Nadja Pakesch, Alix Paulus and Katharina Seifert), which was initiated by the two International Psychoanalytic Association member institutions based in Vienna – the Vienna Psychoanalytic Society (WPV) and the Vienna Psychoanalytic Association (WAP).

From Individual Historical Fates to Current Refugee Movements

The exhibition shows a complex image of the circumstances of refugee and migration movements: taking as its starting point selected individual fates of refugee members, it illustrates the development of psychoanalysis in exile and its continued life in Vienna with the

reestablishment of the WPV in 1946. It avoids reducing this “displacement of reason”¹ to isolated historical events. It also identifies the continued effects of the past with the aim of allowing for a differentiated view regarding current issues of antisemitism and xenophobia as well as current refugee movements.

The Organized Escape

Already on March 13, 1938, the day after the “Anschluss“, the annexation of Austria into National Socialist Germany, the board of the WPV decided that all members were to leave the country as soon as possible, and the new seat of the society was to be relocated to wherever its founder Sigmund Freud would settle. Immediately, the global organization of their rescue began: Also on March 13, The American Psychoanalytic Association established an “Emergency Committee on Relief and Immigration” in order to support their European colleagues in their immigration to the USA as best as possible, on a practical, administrative, and financial level.

In close consultation with Anna Freud, it was in particular the British psychoanalyst Ernest Jones who resolutely and persistently orchestrated the systematic rescue operation from London. There was a broad range of support measures: making available apartments as temporary hiding places, arranging affidavits (sworn statements of sponsors for refugees), taking valuables abroad, organizing visas, and collecting and paying out funds in order to facilitate escape.

In fact, and thanks to this help, all threatened Viennese psychoanalysts had managed to flee from Vienna by spring 1939. Sigmund Freud had left the city on June 4, 1938 by train, and settled in London, where he died in September 1939. The WPV, however, did not relocate its seat to London as had been planned. It was only able to resume its work in Vienna on April 10, 1946, under the presidency of August Aichhorn, who had not left the city. Of all emigrated WPV members, only Walter Hollitscher, Robert Hans Jokl, and Otto Fleischmann returned to Vienna – the latter two, however, soon left Austria again for Topeka/Kansas (Jokl in 1947, Fleischmann in 1949). All other refugees had rebuilt their existences in their new home countries and stayed there. Four WPV members, though – Rosa Walk and Ernst Paul Hoffmann (Wien), Nikola Sugar (Subotica), and Otto Brief (Prague) – were interned after their escape from Austria and murdered, or died as a consequence of internment.

¹ Cf. Stadler, Friedrich (ed.), *Vertriebene Vernunft I. Emigration und Exil österreichischer Wissenschaft 1930–1940*, Munich 1977, p. 11.

Lists, Documents, Maps

The most important testimony to this organized escape is from the archives of the British Psychoanalytical Society in London: a list of 90 names, which was compiled in 1938 and probably kept until 1940, and which was the key working document in order to track each escaping analyst's and candidate's status, from visa matters to financial situations to changes of address. The names are mostly written on a typewriter; most handwritten annotations are in Ernest Jones's handwriting.

Other key documents in the exhibitions are correspondences between the psychoanalytical protagonists as well as municipal registry forms from the Vienna City Archives, passenger lists of ships entering New York, as well as administrative papers from applications for US citizenship. Maps visualize the escape routes and migrations of individual members and provide an overview of the rapid global formation of geographic centers of psychoanalysis. Audio and video interviews with selected analysts provide insights into their fortunes.

Digital and Analogue Exhibition

Exhibition contents will not only be presented in the museum in Berggasse 19, but will also be available at www.freud-museum.at. The digital compilation and availability of all existing emigration documents of individual WPV members has long been a desideratum of academic research into the expulsion of Viennese Jewish intellectuals.

Museum visitors will experience the special exhibition as a kind of labyrinth with a clear temporal and spatial starting point (March 1938), and which— passing so-called dead ends — eventually reaches a destination zone at the end of the exhibition space. This design also serves to sensitize visitors to the fact that for refugees, gaining their freedom does not automatically mean the end of privation and loss — then or now.

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