

# Expatriated psychoanalysts

by Andreas Peglau<sup>1</sup>

*Psychoanalysis was far less suppressed under National Socialism than is usually assumed, even by experts. This - and the special position of Wilhelm Reich - is also proven by the files of the Foreign Office, which was responsible for expatriations at that time, evaluated here for the first time.*

\*

From 1933 to 1945, about 278,500 Jews or persons considered Jewish left Germany and "annexed" Austria, as well as "about 40,000 people who were considered 'enemies' [...] because of their political views, religious convictions, sexual orientation, or artistic activity" (Unger 2009, p. 9). On the one hand, this exodus was desired by the Nazi rulers, but on the other hand it led to unwelcome consequences. For numerous exiles now opposed the regime from abroad (ibid., p. 89 f.):

„[In order] to give the international public a better picture of the German situation and to ask them for support, exiles wrote newspaper articles and pamphlets, organized information events and lecture series, and organized exhibitions [...]. In addition to the founding of political groups, the establishment of magazines and newspapers [as well as the writing of novels, stories, poems, screenplays, etc.] played an important role in the exiles' political, social and cultural-political work.

Writers, journalists, scientists, and artists such as Hannah Arendt, Bertolt Brecht, Hans Eisler, Ernst Fraenkel, Oskar Maria Graf, Alfred Kantorowicz, Walter Janka, Fritz Lang, Erika, Klaus, Heinrich, and Thomas Mann, Anna Seghers, Franz Werfel, and Stefan Zweig participated in the opposition work“ (ibid., pp. 28 f., 60 f., 91-107).

In order to curb such activities, § 2 of the "Law on the Revocation of Naturalizations and the Deprivation of German Citizenship," passed on July 14, 1933, was used.<sup>2</sup> On its basis, "conduct contrary to the duty of loyalty to the Reich and the people" could lead to expatriation, including "collateral penalties." Loss of property, "extension" of expatriation to family members, i.e. clan detention; later deprivation of doctorate and other academic degrees, withdrawal of all pension entitlements, equation of behavior allegedly worthy of expatriation with felonies not subject to a statute of limitations (Lehmann 1985, p. XV). Diplomats and other German state officials around the world now meticulously collected information on unpopular exiles.<sup>3</sup> Making them stateless as quickly as possible, thus also depriving them of the right to articulate themselves as "Germans," was by far the most common procedure.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>1</sup> Published first 2011 in Luzifer-Amor. Zeitschrift zur Geschichte der Psychoanalyse, Jg. 24, issue 47, pp. 103-115. I would like to thank in particular Gerhard Keiper of the Archive of the Foreign Office for his assistance in writing this article. Important information I also received from Roland Kaufhold. Philip Bennett and I followed up on this theme later: Bennett/ Peglau 2014.

For this translation references have been updated, illustrations and some information added. Please cite as: Peglau, Andreas (2023): Expatriated psychoanalysts (<https://andreas-peglau-psychoanalyse.de/expatriated-psychoanalysts/>). **Please note:** My English skills are not very good. Therefore, I first translated the text with [DeepL](#) and then corrected it. I expect that there are still translation errors - and ask those who discover such errors to send a message to [info@andreas-peglau-psychoanalyse.de](mailto:info@andreas-peglau-psychoanalyse.de)

<sup>2</sup> For "denaturalizations" § 1 was available. Such "revocation" of granted citizenship was pronounced against nearly 7,000 Jews and more than 3,500 non-Jews plus dependents (see Lehmann 1985, p. XII).

<sup>3</sup> Cf. Stephan 2007, p. 153; Hachmeister 1998, pp. 144-198.

<sup>4</sup> Actions such as the murder of the emigrated philosopher and publicist Theodor Lessing in 1933 or the kidnapping of the journalist Berthold Jacobs from exile twice in 1935 and 1941 and his transfer to a concentration camp, on the other hand, were very rare exceptions.

Against 39,006 German or former Austrian<sup>5</sup> citizens, the penalty of expatriation under this paragraph was eventually imposed (Lehmann 1985, p. XIV), among them Thomas Mann, Erich Maria Remarque, Lion Feuchtwanger, Bertolt Brecht (Stephan 2007, pp. 125-219).<sup>6</sup>

Of psychoanalysts, members of psychoanalytic organizations, or persons counted as psychoanalysts were affected: Therese Benedek (psychoanalyst in Leipzig, from 1936 in Chicago), Bruno Bettelheim (without formal psychoanalytic training),<sup>7</sup> Wilhelm Reich (IPA member until 1933), and Adolf Josef Storfer (the long-time director of the International Psychoanalytic Publishing House). No other analyst was expatriated, not even Sigmund or Anna Freud.<sup>8</sup> The expatriation decisions were published in the German *Reichsanzeiger* and *Preußischer Staatsanzeiger*. The corresponding files are stored today in the archives of the Foreign Office in Berlin. Among other things, one learns the following about the four persons mentioned there.

## Therese Benedek

On February 28, 1939, the office of the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police (that is: Heinrich Himmler) contacted the Foreign Office in Berlin, with the subject: "Revocation of the German citizenship of the Jew Dr. Tibor Benedek". Thus, no denaturalization proceedings were initiated against Therese Benedek herself; the proceedings were only to be "extended" to her and her two children. Tibor Benedek was essentially accused here: "was close to the SPD and is listed in the *Arbeiterführer*<sup>9</sup> 1931 as a speaker for social hygiene and medicine and belonged to the association of socialist physicians." The Benedeks' closeness to the SPD, specifically their friendship with the family of the prominent Saxon SPD politician and journalist Hermann Liebmann, has also been documented by biographical research.<sup>10</sup>

Nevertheless, it is not entirely certain whether the cited memo was the true or exclusive reason. Even Ernst Simmel, who had even been *chairman* of the Association of Socialist Physicians<sup>11</sup> and was also of Jewish origin, was not expatriated. Often, more recent activities, i.e. those that took place after 1933, triggered the expatriation. Perhaps Tibor Benedek had made critical statements about the *Third Reich* somewhere in the USA, for example at a public event?

Gerhard Keiper of the Archive of the Foreign Office also pointed out to me that many of the reasons given for expatriations do not seem very credible (such as the temporary subscription to a rather bourgeois newspaper in the 1920s). The background could be that the Nazi regime initially preferred methods that could still be reasonably presented as "constitutional" for implementing the goal of removing all Jews from Germany.<sup>12</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Since the further Nazi occupations did not lead to the fact that - analogous to Austria - the citizens of Poland, Czechoslovakia, etc. were now considered Germans, they could not be expatriated from Germany either. Residents of the former Czechoslovakia, however, could lose their "protectorate citizenship" (personal communication G. Keiper, 9. 9. 2010).

<sup>6</sup> It was not until November 1941, in the course of the "Final Solution," that all Jewish Germans with permanent residence outside the Reich borders (250-280,000 people; according to Lehmann 1985, p. XIV) lost their German citizenship through the 11th decree to the Reich Citizenship Law. The Foreign Office no longer had any individual files on this group of people (personal communication from G. Keiper, June 30, 2010).

<sup>7</sup> Cf. Fisher 2003, pp. 73-77, 150 ff.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. the alphabetically arranged expatriation lists in Hepp (1985). In total, more than about 160 psychoanalysts would theoretically have been eligible for expulsions: 89 members of the German psychoanalytic association (Lockot 2002, p. 151) and 68 members of the Viennese psychoanalytic association plus an unknown number of training candidates (Mühlleitner 2005, p. 22). Supplements meanwhile in Schröter 2023, pp. 572-576.

<sup>9</sup> Presumably the journal *Arbeiterführer* for the Leipzig journal.

<sup>10</sup> See Schröter 2012.

<sup>11</sup> See Hermanns and Schultz-Venrath 1993.

<sup>12</sup> Cf. Stephan 2007, pp. 132 ff.

In this respect, reasons for expatriation were probably sometimes simply constructed or anything that could be used as a justification was taken up.

As far as Therese Benedek is concerned, the file does not contain any biographical information other than her date of birth, her former address in Leipzig and her current address in Chicago, the emigration date of April 24, 1936, and the note that Tibor had obtained German citizenship by marrying her in 1921. Nor is there any mention of her activity as a psychoanalyst. On April 21, 1939, Walter Hinrichs, as representative of the Foreign Office,<sup>13</sup> approved the application for expatriation including "extension."

## **Bruno Bettelheim**

For Bettelheim, the Reichsführer SS and Chief of the German Police applied for expatriation on 17. 11. 1940 (R 99893, 5 pages).<sup>14</sup> Here the "extension" referred to his wife Regina. For the then 37-year-old Bettelheim ("Date of emigration: 28. 4. 1939", "Current residence: New-York"), the following were named as "reasons for expatriation": "Dr. Bettelheim was a member of the Association 'Socialist Students of Austria' and later a member of the V. F."<sup>15</sup> In addition, he was charged with his concentration camp "protective custody" "from May 28, 1938 to April 14, 1939" in Dachau and Buchenwald. About his professional career one learns that he had first been a timber merchant, then on February 28, 1938, he received his doctorate at the University of Vienna.<sup>16</sup>

Here, too, there is no indication of any connection between Bettelheim and psychoanalysis. However, he was still in the middle of his training in 1938, and had "just begun his training analysis when the Nazis marched in" (Bettelheim; cited in Fisher 2003, p. 150).

## **Adolf Josef Storfer<sup>17</sup>**

The document on Storfer (R 99896, 4 pages) begins with the usual cover letter, this time dated Aug. 27, 1940. "Reasons for expatriation": "The Jew Adolf Storfer emigrated to Shanghai and acquired there the semiweekly magazine 'Gelbe Post'. In this magazine, nasty inflammatory propaganda against the Third Reich is unfolded." Storfer (cf. on him Mühlleitner 1992, pp. 334-336) had addressed (mainly Jewish) émigrés with his initially bimonthly magazine, but initially strove for political neutrality (cf. Storfer 1999). This changed with issue 6, published at the end of July 1939, in which an article on the current Japanese-Chinese conflict showed clear sympathy with a "general anti-imperialist and anti-fascist program in the sense of a 'people's front policy,'" and poem by Oskar Panizza was used to hold up a bitter mirror to Nazi Germany (ibid., pp. 142, 139). Issue 7, published on November 1, 1939, contained a revealing caricature of "Roosevelt, Stalin, Hitler, Mussolini" (ibid., p. 156). Thereafter, Storfer had the *Gelbe Post* published first monthly, then fortnightly, i.e., "semi-weekly" - during which time he seems to have come to the attention of the German authorities - then weekly, finally daily, until he had to discontinue it in August 1940 (Rosdy 1999, p. 6). Presumably, Storfer's Nazi criticism intensified further from the end of 1939; in any case, it seems to have set in motion the expatriation that was then decided on Sept. 7, 1940.<sup>18</sup>

---

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Stephan 2007, pp. 189 f., note 33 f.

<sup>14</sup> Facsimile at: [www.hagalil.com/archiv/20-10/07/bettelheim-ausbuengerung.pdf](http://www.hagalil.com/archiv/20-10/07/bettelheim-ausbuengerung.pdf).

<sup>15</sup> V. F. = Vaterländische Front (with thanks to Roland Kaufhold).

<sup>16</sup> On 8. 5. 1941 he was deprived of his doctorate for racist reasons; see [www.hagalil.com/archiv/2010/03/09/bettelheim-einfuehrung](http://www.hagalil.com/archiv/2010/03/09/bettelheim-einfuehrung).

<sup>17</sup> There is now a detailed biographical study on him: Kaufhold 2018.

<sup>18</sup> Since the relevant document had "inadvertently" not been sent, this was reconfirmed on 29. 11. 1940.

Also with Storfer, however: no reference to psychoanalysis in the file. As profession is given: "writer".

## Wilhelm Reich

The most extensive are the documents on Wilhelm Reich (R 99855) with 37 pages. On 23.4.1938, only five weeks after the „Anschluss“ of Austria, which made Reich as well as Storfer and Bettelheim involuntarily German citizens, the German legation in Oslo requested in a letter to the Foreign Office in Berlin that Reich's expatriation be "expedited," since otherwise "there is a danger that Reich, as a former Austrian citizen, will one day be deported to Germany" - and, one can probably continue the idea behind this: Reich could then have a "disintegrating" effect there. The accusations against Reich cover several pages, from his membership in the Austrian CP and SP at the end of the 1920s, communist activity in Germany until 1933, which he allegedly continued in Denmark and Norway ("is said to receive considerable sums of money from Moscow")<sup>19</sup> to parts of his research work: "The Jew Reich, [...] one of the worst Jewish types imaginable, had chosen as his main subject 'sexual economics', a 'science' which even Marxists today describe as a swinishness".

Since it could not be foreseen when the expatriation decision would be made, the office of the Reichsführer SS gave the go-ahead on Dec. 16, 1938, for the approval of a "passport limited to those for entry into America," which Reich had applied for shortly before. The condition, however, was that he "prove that he was actually emigrating there." Apparently, they wanted him far away at first, so that they could then deny him citizenship in the U.S. as quickly as possible.

Dr.Wilhelm Reich  
Oslo,den 15.April 1939  
Drammensveien 110 H.

An die Deutsche Gesandtschaft in Oslo

Oslo

Ich möchte hiermit schriftlich festhalten, was ich gestern in Gegenwart zweier Zeugen, des Herrn Advokaten Annæus Schjødt,Oslo, und Mrs. Constance Tracey, London, dem Beamten sagte, der meine Passangelegenheit abzufertigen hatte. Der Pass lautete auf den Namen Wilhelm Israel Reich. Er entsprach daher nicht den Papieren, die ich, ausgestellt von den früheren österreichischen Behörden, im Besitz habe. Ich hatte um keine Namensänderung angesucht. Die von Ihnen durchgeführte Namensänderung ist daher unrechtmässig. Aus diesem Grunde konnte ich das Dokument nicht akzeptieren. Ich könnte keinem Beamten an irgendeiner Stelle der Welt klarmachen, weshalb mein Passname und mein Name auf den übrigen Papieren nicht übereinstimmen. Desgleichen musste ich ein Dokument zurückweisen, das in offenkundig diffamierender Weise eine Person einer bestimmten Nationalität zu brandmarken beabsichtigt.

Ich erkläre ausserdem, dass ich auf die deutsche Staatsbürgerschaft verzichte, solange unzutreffende Namensausfertigungen auf offiziellen Dokumenten offiziell gutgeheissen werden. Ich habe den Pass unterschrieben, als er noch nicht ausgefüllt war. Ich hätte es nicht getan, wenn mir seine Abfassung bekannt gegeben worden wäre. Meine Unterschrift ist daher ungültig.

gez. Dr.med.Wilhelm Reich.

In April 1939, Reich was handed this passport<sup>20</sup> - and Reich refused it. His written reasons<sup>21</sup> are also contained in the files (see left):

"The passport was in the name of Wilhelm Israel Reich. It therefore did not correspond the papers that I [...] have in my possession. I had not applied for a change of name. The change of name carried out by you is therefore unlawful. [...]

Similarly, I had to reject a document that is intended to brand a person of a certain nationality."

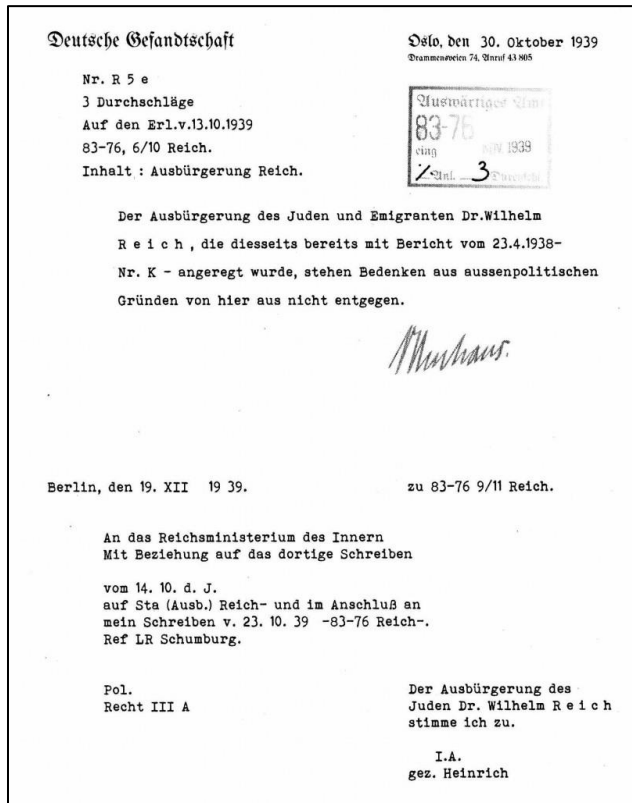
I also declare that I renounce my German citizenship, as long as inaccurate name executions on official documents are officially approved" (ibid.).

<sup>19</sup> In reality, he had long since been outlawed by the Comintern at that point (see Sharaf 1994 [1983], pp. 192-206).

<sup>20</sup> His Austrian passport had been taken from him earlier.

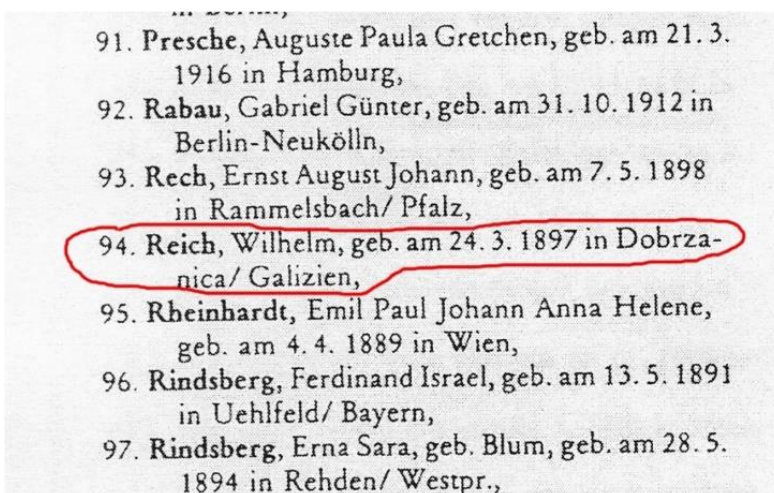
<sup>21</sup> Underlining in the original. Cf. also Reich 1997, pp. 277f., 308, 310ff., 335. In the article imprint in Luzifer-Amor only excerpts from this letter were quoted.

After further correspondence between the Reichssicherheitshauptamt/Reichsführer SS, the Reich Ministry of the Interior, the Foreign Office, and the Oslo Embassy, agreement was reached on 19 December 1939 to expel Reich - four months after he had already left Norway for the USA with the help of an "American professor visa".



Left: „The expatriation of the Jew and emigrant Dr. Wilhelm Reich (...) is not opposed by concerns on foreign policy grounds.“

On May 27, 1940, Wilhelm Reich was then also listed in expatriation list No. 178 in the *Reichsanzeiger* (Hepp 1985, vol. 1, p. 344).



But also in the, as said, partly quite detailed 37 file pages of the Foreign Office concerning Wilhelm Reich: no mention of psychoanalysis.<sup>22</sup> [15]

Left: From expatriation list No. 178 in the *Reichsanzeiger*

<sup>22</sup> A more detailed evaluation of this file can be found in Peglau 2017, pp. 329-345.

## Conclusion

The files evaluated here support the thesis that no one experienced Nazi persecution because of psychoanalytic activity per se or because of membership in analytic organizations.<sup>23</sup> If psychoanalysts became victims of the Nazi system, it was never because they were psychoanalysts, but because of their Jewish origins or in a very few cases, because of resistant, especially politically "left-wing" statements or activities.<sup>24</sup>

The fact that only four persons from the circle of psychoanalysts were affected by Nazi expatriations also points to the small extent to which psychoanalysts positioned themselves against National Socialism and fascism in a way that attracted public attention.<sup>25</sup>

Reich was furthermore a special case with regard to expatriation. Adolf Storfer never worked as a psychotherapist. Bruno Bettelheim had only begun an analytic training, which he never completed. And Therese Benedek was only expelled because her husband had been politically active on the "left".

The only psychoanalytic therapist who was deprived of German citizenship for his political activities was Wilhelm Reich.

\*\*\*

**Addendum 2023:** Roland Kaufhold (2017, 2018) has published in two studies the discovery that Storfer was observed and persecuted by Nazi media in Shanghai. In July 1939, the Nazi rabble-rousing newspaper „Der Stürmer,“ edited by Julius Streicher, published an attack against Storfer written by an unnamed National Socialist, probably living in Shanghai, which apparently also concerned „Die gelbe Post“: „An emigrant from Vienna has settled in Shanghai. It is the Jew A. J. Storfer, who once headed the International Psychoanalytical Publishing House in Vienna. (...) What is psychoanalysis? A 'scientific' system which wanted to make degenerated Jewish sexual feeling obligatory for the peoples of all races. This teaching is a single Jewish swinishness. (...) The Jew A. J. Storfer (...) is working to inject his Jewish poison into wide circles of the Chinese people. At his poison the Chinese people, which is already very much decomposed by communism, shall perish completely.“ (Kaufhold, 2018, p. 10) It can be assumed that Storfer's expatriation was set in motion by this „Stürmer“ denunciation.

---

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Schröter 2009, p. 1088f.

<sup>24</sup> For this see now also Kaufhold/ Hristeva 2021. Here one can find also numerous, previously unpublished biographical information, also on lesser-known Jewish Nazi victims from the circle of analysts, especially pp. 9, 33-53.

<sup>25</sup> More on this in Peglau 2017.

## Literature

- Bennett, P. W. and Peglau, A. (2014): The Nazi Denaturalization of German Emigrants: The Case of Wilhelm Reich, in *German Studies Review* 37: 1, pp. 41–60.
- Fisher, D. J. (2003): *Psychoanalytische Kulturkritik und die Seele des Menschen. Essays über Bruno Bettelheim*. Gießen (Psychosozial).
- Hachmeister, L. (1998): *Der Gegnerforscher. Die Karriere des SS-Führers Franz Alfred Six*. München (Beck).
- Hepp, M. (ed.) (1985): *Die Ausbürgerung deutscher Staatsangehöriger nach den im Reichsanzeiger veröffentlichten Listen*. München (Saur).
- Hermanns, L. M. and Schultz-Venrath, U. (1993): Einleitung. In: Simmel, E.: *Psychoanalyse und ihre Anwendungen*. Frankfurt a. M. (Fischer): pp. 9-18.
- Kaufhold, R. (2017): Ein Wiener in Asien. In: *Jüdische Allgemeine*, 11.8.2017
- Kaufhold, R. (2018). Der jüdische Psychoanalytiker und Emigrant Adolf Josef Storfer unter nationalsozialistischer Beobachtung. *Die gelbe Post – eine deutschsprachige Emigrantenzeitschrift aus Shanghai*. *Psychoanalyse im Widerspruch*, 59, pp. 9–48.
- Kaufhold, R. and Hristeva, G. (2021): "Das Leben ist aus. Abrechnung halten!" Eine Erinnerung an vertriebene jüdische Psychoanalytiker unter besonderer Berücksichtigung von Wilhelm Reichs epochemachenden Faschismus-Analysen. *Psychoanalyse im Widerspruch*, Nr. 66, 33 (2) 2021, pp. 7–66.
- Lehmann, H. G. (1985): Acht und Ächtung politischer Gegner im Dritten Reich. Die Ausbürgerung deutscher Emigranten 1933-1945. In: Hepp (1985): pp. IX-XXIII.
- Locket, R. (2002): *Erinnern und Durcharbeiten. Zur Geschichte der Psychoanalyse und Psychotherapie im Nationalsozialismus*, Gießen (Psychosozial).
- Mühlleitner, E. (1992): *Biographisches Lexikon der Psychoanalyse. Die Mitglieder der Psychologischen Mittwoch-Gesellschaft und der Wiener Psychoanalytischen Vereinigung 1902-1938*. Tübingen (ed. diskord).
- Mühlleitner, E. (2005): Das Ende der psychoanalytischen Bewegung in Wien und die Auflösung der Wiener Psychoanalytischen Vereinigung, in *Wiener Psychoanalytische Vereinigung (Hg.): Trauma der Psychoanalyse? Die Vertreibung der Psychoanalyse aus Wien 1938 und die Folgen*, Wien (Mille Tre): pp. 12-27.
- Peglau, A. (2017) [2013]: *Unpolitische Wissenschaft? Wilhelm Reich und die Psychoanalyse im Nationalsozialismus*. Gießen (Psychosozial).
- Rosdy, P. (1999): *Adolf Josef Storfer, Shanghai und die Gelbe Post. Dokumentation zum Reprint der Gelben Post*. Wien (Turia + Kant) [in Storfer 1999].
- Reich, Wilhelm (1997): *Jenseits der Psychologie. Briefe und Tagebücher 1934-1939*, Köln (Kiepenheuer & Witsch).
- Schröter, M. (2009): „Hier läuft alles zur Zufriedenheit, abgesehen von den Verlusten ...“. *Die Deutsche Psychoanalytische Gesellschaft 1933-1936*. *Psyche*, 63: pp. 1085-1130.

Schröter, M. (2012): Verschüttete Anfänge. Therese Benedek und die Frühgeschichte der Psychoanalyse in Leipzig 1919–1936. *Psyche*, 66: pp. 1166–1209.

Schröter, M. (2023): Auf eigenem Weg. Die Geschichte der Psychoanalyse in Deutschland bis 1945, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht.

Sharaf, M. (1994) [1983]: Wilhelm Reich: Der heilige Zorn des Lebendigen. Die Biografie. Berlin (Simon und Leutner).

Stephan, A. (2007): Überwacht, ausgebürgert, exiliert. Schriftsteller und der Staat. Bielefeld (Aisthesis).

Storfer, A. J. (Hg.) (1999): Gelbe Post. Ostasiatische Illustrierte Halbmonatszeitschrift (Reprint). Wien (Turia + Kant).

Unger, C. R. (2009): Reise ohne Wiederkehr? Leben im Exil 1933 bis 1945. Darmstadt (Primus).

**The forwarding and distribution of this text for *non*-commercial purposes is expressly desired.**