

Section from *The Interwoven Lives of Sigmund, Anna and W. Ernest Freud* by Daniel S. Benveniste (IPBooks 2015) on W. Ernest Freud's time in Palestine 1935-1936.

When Ernst matriculated he was somewhat estranged from his family in Hamburg. He certainly couldn't go back to Germany and didn't have any place to call home. The Freuds had given him what they could, but he was now a young man and expected to be more independent. It could have been a wonderful time to explore the world if the world wasn't such a mess and if he wasn't so unsure about what to do with himself. Theodore Herzl's answer to Jews was the Zionist vision of the Promised Land: creating what was to become Israel. Ernst was not a religious Jew, nor a Zionist, but he had few options, and if nothing else, a trip to Palestine could turn into an adventure.

On December 10, 1935, Freud wrote in his log, "Ernstl to Palestine" (Molnar, 1992, p. 192). Ernst kept an itinerary, which allows us to track where he was and when. Simcha Shalom Brooks, an Israeli friend of Ernst's, provided the place descriptions.

Ernst traveled from Vienna to Trieste, where he caught the S.S. *Gerusalemme* and arrived in Haifa on December 16, 1935. On the twenty-second he went to Haifa Beth-Alpha, an important Jewish center since ancient times, within Kibbutz Haftzi-ba. On the twenty-third he traveled to Tiberias and then to Kibbutz Degania, one of the oldest Jewish settlements in Galilee. Degania and the other kibbutzim suffered armed attacks from local Arabs and those on the kibbutzim defended themselves with rifles and Molotov cocktails. The situation in the region was tense before the war of independence, so it was risky to live and work there. On December 25 Ernst went from Delhamia to Kibbutz Gesher, to Degania, and on the next day from Haifa to Jerusalem. In Haifa he visited his grandfather's friend Arnold Zweig (E. L. Freud, 1970, p. 114).

### **1936: A World in Chaos and the Mechanisms of Defense**

Throughout January and February 1936, Ernst traveled back and forth between Jerusalem and Petach-Tikwa, which was one of the largest Hebrew-speaking towns at the time, located in what is now the center of Israel, on the way to Jerusalem. In March he spent time in Tel Aviv, and then from May through June he spent the majority of his time in Haifa, returning to Jerusalem intermittently. He worked for a time near Afula, a town located at the entrance to the Valley of Megiddo, not far from Netanya, planting trees and living on a kibbutz. He remembered working hard on the kibbutz, tending the crops and being on the lookout for Arabs coming in the night to light the wheat fields on fire.

Articles from the *Palestine Post* during the time of Ernst's visit reveal news of the day. Arab party leaders petitioned for self-governance, to stop Jewish immigration, and to prohibit land sales to Jews. Arab village elders were found guilty of setting fire to haystacks in the town of Zichron Jacob, thirty-five miles south of Haifa. Arabs decided that if their demands were not met they would employ civil disobedience tactics and not pay their taxes. A headline from May 17, 1936, reads, "3 Shot Dead in Jerusalem Cinema: More Jewish Victims: Armed Bandit Fires Point Blank into Theater Crowd, Assassin Escapes in Car." On June 3 two buses were fired on between Achuza, a kibbutz, and Mt. Carmel; shots were fired from the hills near Nablus and Deir Sharaf; three bombs exploded near Tulkarm; a bomb exploded at Nazareth; a crop fire broke out at Tel Adashim; and a hut burned at Yavniel. On June 14, a local headline read, "Eighteen Injured in Bomb Outrage: Explosion in Haifa Train," and similar events were going on throughout the region (Rath & Frenkel, 1978, pp. 26–35).

During his six months in Palestine, Ernst spent much of his time on a kibbutz, living out of a hotel in Haifa or staying at the home of Max Eitingon in Talbye, Jerusalem—not far from the King David Hotel (Letter from WEF to Bertha Halberstadt, April 17, 1957, WEFB–B). In May, Ernst sent a birthday greeting to his grandfather on his eightieth birthday. Freud responded with a preprinted card that said, "May I sincerely

thank you for your participation in the celebration of my eightieth birthday.” Underneath the preprinted message, Freud wrote by hand, “Grandfather is hoping you will find a nice home” (SFM Archives).

As Ernst recalled, the family was hoping that he would like Palestine and perhaps settle there. But he didn’t like it so much, and on July 1, 1936, he boarded the S.S. *Palestina* and then arrived in Trieste on the sixth and in Vienna on the ninth.