

Lion Feuchtwanger: From Moscow to Hollywood

Episode 30 of *Exile*

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SFX - Opening score from The Oppenheim Family

JOSHUA MALINA: We're listening to the opening score of a black-and-white film set in Berlin, 1938. In an exterior shot, a train races along the tracks, bringing commuters into the city. Inside, passengers sit in tense silence. Wealthy men in top hats read newspapers. A tired-looking woman clutches a baby.

Suddenly, a man in a cap stands and begins singing a Nazi propaganda song.

SFX - A man singing in Russian; dialogue continues under VO

JOSHUA MALINA: The camera pans to two other passengers listening to the man sing. One comments quietly that he's already heard the song three times that day; his friend says the song is nonsense. A teacher sitting nearby agrees. The music, he says, is a far cry from Mozart. The man in the cap stops singing and stumbles drunkenly over to the teacher. He shouts: "You don't like it, Jewish pigs?" Then the man attacks the teacher as the camera pans swiftly away to horrified faces. Someone screams, but nobody else on the train moves. They are frozen in fear. The camera pans back to the teacher - now dead. This is a scene from the 1939 film *The Oppenheim Family*. Released just before the beginning of World War II, it captures - in black and white - how the Nazis were growing bolder by the day. The film is an adaptation of Lion Feuchtwanger's novel *The Oppermann Siblings*—one of the first pieces of writing to depict the rise of fascism in Germany. But if this film takes place in Germany...why is everyone speaking Russian?

THEME MUSIC UP

JOSHUA MALINA: Welcome to Exile, a podcast from the Leo Baeck Institute, New

York. When everything is taken away—then what? From LBI’s archives, untold stories of Jewish lives in the shadow of fascism. Today, a story of bravery—and the price a German writer paid for sounding the alarm about Nazism.

THEME MUSIC OUT

JOSHUA MALINA: Lion Feuchtwanger was born in Munich in 1884, the oldest son in a middle-class Jewish family of respected entrepreneurs. His grandfather founded one of Germany’s first margarine factories, and his brother Ludwig ran a publishing house. But Lion went in a different direction. He discovered early that he had a gift for writing, even winning a school prize for one of his first stories. He went on to study history, philosophy, and literature. After graduating, he spent some time as a theatre critic before eventually turning to fiction. Lion was on his way to becoming one of Germany’s most celebrated novelists - and also one of the sharpest critics of its rising fascism. By the early 1930s, his books were widely read across Europe and the United States, especially his early anti-Nazi works. The first, titled *Jud Süß*, was a historical novel about power, prejudice, and manipulation - based on a notorious execution of an 18th century Jewish banker. It was a warning of how antisemitism could be weaponized.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: *Jud Süß* when it was published in Germany in 1925 was extremely successful. It also fared extremely well in the English speaking world.

JOSHUA MALINA: This is Adrian Feuchtwanger, Lion’s great-nephew. He’s also a professor, journalist, and translator. Lion followed *Jud Süß* with his novel *Success*, an account of political corruption and moral decline in 1920s Munich. It was one of the first satirical literary treatments of Hitler, who was then just a fringe far-right agitator. It was a portrait Hitler and his supporters would not soon forget. These novels made Lion an international literary star. And, to a rising fascist movement, a target. His brother Ludwig, for one, was worried.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: My grandfather Ludwig Feuchtwanger, the director of the academic publisher Duncker & Humblot at that time, visited Lion Feuchtwanger in Berlin in 1929 when Lion was writing the novel *Success* and

Lion read him passages from it. And my grandfather evidently was unsettled because he realized it might have very unpleasant consequences for him, and for Edgar Feuchwanger, my father.

JOSHUA MALINA: Ludwig was right to be concerned. But in early 1933, before Hitler's appointment as Chancellor, Lion was still being celebrated. He was even invited on a months-long book tour around the United States by his American publisher, where he eventually found an unlikely friend and fan in Eleanor Roosevelt. Lion wrote about the encounter in his diary, which his nephew, Adrian, later translated.

LION FEUCHTWANGER: In the evening, dinner with Mrs. Roosevelt. My little speech was a success. I am celebrated everywhere. Mrs. Roosevelt invites me to visit her and her husband. New York, January 25th, 1933.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: This was shortly before FDR took office on March the 4th, 1933. Eleanor Roosevelt was already a fan of Lion's novels and they were on common ground ideologically with a strong commitment to the rights of underrepresented groups. And the success of *Jud Süß* in the US edition published by the Viking Press was still resonating in the US. And Lion was often quoted in the American press on the subject of German-Jewish affairs. The dinner was probably a sort of meeting of the minds.

JOSHUA MALINA: But the celebration did not last. Just a few days later, on January 30, 1933, Hitler was appointed Chancellor of Germany. Just over a month later, in early March, Lion's property in Berlin was seized, and his home was ransacked. Being in the United States likely saved Lion's life. Luckily, his wife Marta was also safe—she was on a ski trip in Austria. But still, they were forced to watch their life being dismantled from afar.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: It was easy for the regime to seize his assets, his Berlin home in which he'd been working as a full-time writer and its contents, including his library of historic books, which were used as primary sources for his historical novels and manuscripts of works in progress. At the time the only action he could take was to write objection letters to foreign media. A sarcastic

open letter which he wrote to the subsequent occupant of his Berlin home published in the *Pariser Tageblatt* in 1935.

LION FEUCHTWANGER: How do you like my house? How are you enjoying living there? Was there any damage to the silvery grey carpets upstairs when the Stormtroopers were there looting? They were intent on exploiting the situation while I was away in America and my caretaker had to stay in relative safety upstairs. Red leaves behind a powerful stain which is hard to remove.

JOSHUA MALINA: Just three months after Hitler became Chancellor, pro-Nazi university students staged book-burning rallies, torching any works, including Lion's, they branded as "un-German."

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: His books were banned, blacklisted, and burned by the Nazi student movement.

JOSHUA MALINA: This is Miriam Chorley-Schulz. She's an assistant professor of Holocaust studies at the University of Oregon, where she focuses on modern Jewish intellectual history.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: This is of course absolutely horrific, but it tells you something about the power of his writing, right?

JOSHUA MALINA: These book burning rallies targeting Jewish, anti-war, or simply left-leaning authors resulted in a mass exodus of writers and artists from Germany. And then, in August 1933, the Nazi regime issued its first of many denaturalization lists, stripping 33 of their most prominent opponents of their German citizenship. Lion Feuchtwanger was among them.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: His citizenship was stripped and his name appeared on publishing blacklists which meant all royalties from Germany ceased. No one had the courage or felt confident to do anything for Lion. Everyone was in jeopardy.

JOSHUA MALINA: Lion and his wife, Marta, were now stateless. Many German-Jewish artists, including brothers Thomas and Heinrich Mann, Bertolt Brecht, and Arnold Zweig, had already fled to a quiet stretch of coast in the south of France, with bright blue water and salty air. This was Sanary-sur-Mer, where exiles found a fleeting sense of peace. Lion and Marta decided to join them. It was here that Lion wrote *Die Geschwister Oppermann*, or *The Oppermans* in English. The story followed a prominent German-Jewish family as their businesses and lives were destroyed by the rapid rise of Nazism in 1932 and 1933. One brother, a successful doctor, is forced from his practice, while two others have their business taken through a series of coerced sales and sham mergers—a process known as Aryanization. Drawing on news reports and correspondence with his family, Lion delivered an immediate and painfully accurate, fictional account of what German Jews were facing in the real world.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: It's a really stunning work, being written already in 1933. I mean, it is, *The Oppermans* is the first novel about the rise of fascism in Germany. I read it and was shell-shocked that somebody could write this novel as things were unfolding, as he was losing his citizenship in exile already, losing all of his possessions, was suffering exactly from the things that he was describing in the novel.

JOSHUA MALINA: Indeed, the pain in Lion's novel was not theoretical. It was a story of a family that closely mirrored his own.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: *The Oppermans* was true to life, vis-a-vis what my own family experienced. In the novel, the Opperman furniture business and how it undergoes Aryanization is an accurate, very accurate representation of what was going on in Nazi Germany against a backdrop of anti-Jewish campaigns, boycotts and so-called collective measures taking place all across the country.

JOSHUA MALINA: In the West, *The Oppermans* sold widely.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: When *The Oppermans* was first published, it sold roughly 20,000 copies in German alone. And beyond German, it was

translated into 10 other languages, including English, and went on to sell an estimated quarter of a million copies worldwide.

JOSHUA MALINA: It was published by Querido Verlag, an exile press based in Amsterdam, not answerable to the ban on Lion's books in Germany. That meant its German-language readership was concentrated in places like Switzerland, Austria, and German-speaking émigré communities abroad. But it was its strong sales in translation that showed how powerfully it resonated with international audiences. And for these Western readers, the question became...was it fiction? Or did it depict what was happening to Jewish professionals and businesses in real time? By 1935, Germany was firmly under Hitler's fascist regime. Dissent was being crushed, freedoms restricted, and racial laws were taking hold. Across the continent, Stalin's Soviet Union was also consolidating its communist regime, ruling through censorship, the execution of rivals, and purges—mass arrests and deportations to labor camps for anyone seen as a threat. And so, as part of a broader campaign to improve its reputation and earn Western favor, the Soviet Union launched a cultural outreach program. They courted Western writers and artist—including Lion. They granted free trips to Moscow and publicity in exchange for a kinder portrait abroad. For Lion and these other artists, the invitation was tempting—but the decision of whether to accept it was complex.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: It took place in the context of Soviet international cultural outreach. Again, a heavily debated field of historical research now for obvious reasons because of the Great Terror and had to take place in the context of navigating your way through the Great Terror as a creative figure.

JOSHUA MALINA: The Great Terror was the peak of Stalin's campaign of political repression in the Soviet Union. Millions were arrested, imprisoned, or executed as the regime eliminated anyone not falling in line with its rule. But as Hitler's rise still seemed the more urgent danger. Lion decided to go.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: I think the main point that one can say in Lion's favor is that, and I have done so myself and chatted with my father many times

about it, is that the situation that time was desperate, seemed as though the Western powers were not going to put up any resistance to the Nazi regime.

JOSHUA MALINA: At the time, the full extent of the Great Terror was not known in the West; Soviet propaganda maintained an image of progress and unity, and many foreign visitors were shown carefully managed glimpses of life under Stalin. Lion arrived in Moscow in 1937, at the height of the Terror. It was a choice that confused some of his fellow authors at the time, and one he would be faulted for later. He stayed in the Soviet Union for 10 weeks. While he was there, he started working with the Moscow film studio Mosfilm and the esteemed Russian director Grigori Roshal. They wanted to make a film adaptation of *The Oppermanns*.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: So right before the novel was published in November 1933, it caught the attention of Theo Oppermann. And Theo Oppermann was a Nazi party member and an owner of a fiercely anti-Jewish newspaper. And you can imagine Mr. Oppermann was furious that the book used his family name and even threatened to have Feuchtwanger's brother, who at the time was still living in Germany, deported to a concentration camp unless the name was changed.

JOSHUA MALINA: As a result, the first two editions of the novel were published with the family name "Oppenheim". It was eventually changed back to "Opperman" in future editions, but at the time the film was being developed, it seemed prudent to go with Oppenheim. There were other changes made to the film to appease Soviet sensibilities. The film pared back the private business and Aryanization plotlines, which were deemed too "capitalist" for Stalin's regime. Instead, they shifted the emphasis to a Jewish schoolboy's struggle with a Nazi teacher, which had been a subplot in the novel.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: It's very important to understand in the context of Lion's trip to Moscow that one of the reasons he went was to work in a physical situation, sitting down with Grigori Roshal, working on the script head to head. He really wanted to make sure that this film saw the light of day in a form that was going to be satisfactory, namely not strictly politically tendentious in the way that

one might expect from a Soviet-made film during that period and at the same time navigating through the incredibly treacherous waters of creative filmmaking under the Great Terror.

JOSHUA MALINA: This tenuous artistic marriage worked because Lion's values aligned with Stalin's propagandists in wanting a film that carried a clear anti-fascist message. The win for the Soviet Union? A showcase for its communist ideals. For Lion, a final, urgent appeal to wake the West up to Germany's reality. Ultimately, Lion did publish a very positive account of his visit to the Soviet Union, entitled *Moscow 1937*. In it, he praised Soviet cultural ambition and social programs, and defended parts of the regime at the height of the purges. It was shocking to many. Here's Lion's great nephew, Adrian, again.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: Although *Moscow 1937* was so unequivocally pro-Stalin, I think it's fair to say that Lion's healthy cynicism didn't entirely desert him. For example, he stopped off on the way back from Moscow in Prague to visit his sister, my great-aunt Bella, and she said that he had told her that he was well aware that there were Potemkin villages and that the golden taps in his Moscow hotel often produced no water. Lion also apparently said to Stalin, "How much pleasure does it give you that there's a picture of you on every toilet seat in Russia?" to which Stalin apparently replied, "That's how things work here."

JOSHUA MALINA: Across Europe and North America, communist parties were growing, energized by labor struggles, anti-fascist organizing, and civil rights efforts. Some saw the Soviet Union as a powerful counterweight to fascism, and at first, Stalin was successful in hiding the darker realities of his rule. But still, Lion's endorsement of Stalin's Russia would follow him for decades. The Soviet film adaptation of *The Oppermans* was finally released in Russia in 1938, followed by a premiere in New York in May 1939. Here's an excerpt from the New York Times Review: "It remains for the Soviet cinema to face certain unpleasant realities now *allegedly* prevalent in the German nation. Plainly, in the absence of better evidence, 'The Oppenheim Family' must be accepted as a document. The lack of genuine indignation, however, is partly compensated by a strangely appropriate effect of unreality, as if the actors were

characters playing parts in a nightmare, in which none of them can quite believe.” The review was mostly positive, but the casual use of the word “allegedly” to describe the film’s plot revealed how much Americans still doubted Nazi cruelty. Then, just one month after its release, the film was banned in America. Here’s Miriam Chorley-Schultz again.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: Hollywood famously throughout the 1930s did not touch the topic of German Nazism at all. It had a very strict self-censorship code called the Hays Code. And basically it privileged the German market over producing anti-Nazi material. It didn’t want to offend.

JOSHUA MALINA: Germany was a crucial overseas market for American films at a time when Hollywood was still recovering from the Depression, and studios weren’t willing to risk losing that audience.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: In this Hays Code, there was a curious little section that said, all nations need to be treated fairly. And we also know that, of course, not all nations were treated fairly in Hollywood films during the 1930s, but apparently the German market was much more important. I found a little short announcement in the *Hollywood Reporter* from June 1st, 1939. It is titled “Oppenheim Banned.” It simply says, “police censors yesterday banned the Soviet film, *The Oppenheim Family*, because it, quote, exposes to contempt, derision, a class of German citizens.”

JOSHUA MALINA: Then, in August 1939, just three months after the film’s release, Hitler and Stalin shocked the world by signing the German-Soviet Pact. Framed as a non-aggression treaty, it carried a secret agreement to divide parts of Eastern Europe, carving up Poland between them and placing the Baltic states and Bessarabia under Soviet control.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: What this meant in the Soviet Union was simply that all of those anti-Nazi films that the Soviet Union did actually produce were shelved because suddenly from one moment to the next anti-Nazi propaganda was passé. It was not the thing anymore.

JOSHUA MALINA: For all intents and purposes, Lion's film was buried. And then, on September first, Germany invaded Poland, and World War II began. With the war raging, Lion stayed in Sanary-sur-Mer with his wife Marta and a circle of exiled German artists. For a time, they were sheltered by the distance. Until German forces launched an offensive against France in May 1940. On June 14th, Paris fell to Germany, and by June 25, France was under German control. Ultimately, France signed an armistice that placed the north and west, including Paris and the Atlantic coast, under German occupation. The remaining portion of the country became the so-called "Free Zone", and a new French government was established in Vichy to administer it. There, French officials still ruled under German pressure, eager to keep their autonomy by doing Berlin's bidding.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: The Vichy regime, the collaborationist regime, which saw to it that no mercy was shown in terms of rounding up German citizens who are present on French soil, especially ironic was the fact that some of them were enemies of Nazi Germany, prominent writers who had opposed the rise of the Nazis in the press.

JOSHUA MALINA: Along with many of the German exiles in Sanary-sur-Mer, Marta and Lion were herded into camps by the French under the pretense that they could be "dangerous." They were sent to separate camps in different locations, unable to communicate. For Lion, the only thing worse than the straw-filled beds and the seven crude latrines for 2000 men, was the knowledge of what might come next. If word reached Hitler's forces that he had been interned by the Vichy government, he was doomed. But luckily, a powerful old friend was ready to come to his aid.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: They would have nabbed him and taken him away and that would have been the end of it. But fortunately Eleanor Roosevelt was alerted to Lion's internment.

JOSHUA MALINA: The wife of the president of the United States remembered the wonderful German-Jewish author she had met while he was on his book tour all those years ago. When she heard that he was among the many important Jewish figures

being interned in France, she knew she had to help get all of them out of Europe for good.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: And she immediately stepped up her efforts with the Emergency Rescue Committee to put in motion these efforts.

JOSHUA MALINA: The Emergency Rescue Committee was a network of American journalists, artists, and activists working secretly to help endangered writers escape occupied France. Eleanor Roosevelt contacted one of its leaders, journalist Varian Fry, to help her save Lion. But they had a problem: they didn't know where Lion was being held. That's where Marta came in. She had already made her own daring escape from the Gurs internment camp, crawling under barbed wire with forged papers. Once she was free, Marta learned that Lion had also attempted an escape—but returned to the camp after five days in hiding. Without papers, he had discovered movement was impossible, and the French-run camp was safer than risking German capture. In an amazing stroke of luck, Marta met the woman who had sheltered Lion those five days and knew where he was now interned. Marta travelled to the American consulate in Marseilles, where she met Vice Consul Harry Standish, who had been quietly coordinating with Varian Fry. Now, she was able to provide the one piece of information no one else had: Lion's precise location. With that, Standish could finally act, and he began planning the rescue that would bring Lion to safety. From her diaries, translated by Adrian Feuchtwanger, Marta recounts the escape in vivid detail.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER: I told Vice-Councilor Standish it would be best to approach the camp in the afternoon. Some of the inmates were allowed to leave the camp and bathe in the river, where they were only lightly guarded. Who would dare escape in only their trousers? I also gave Standish a piece of paper to hold in the palm of his hand. I had written on it. "Don't ask any questions. Don't say anything, just go with him." I didn't sign it since I knew Lion would recognise my handwriting and so it happened. Standish left the car parked behind bushes. He gave Lion a long coat and headscarf. When the car was stopped and Standish, with his American diplomatic pass, was asked who was sitting in the back, he replied, "This is my mother-in-law."

JOSHUA MALINA: Lion was, in fact dressed, as a woman—a legendary part of his escape.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: I can quote the *Daily Telegraph* because this story appeared on the front page of the *Daily Telegraph*, and the headline was “Feuchtwanger escapes from an internment camp dressed as a woman”. *Daily Telegraph* is a reputable newspaper of record.

JOSHUA MALINA: The ruse worked. Lion was free.

MARTA FEUCHTWANGER: Lion stepped out of the car in Marseilles, still in disguise, and found me waiting for him in front of the consul's house. Standish himself disappeared and we never saw him again.

JOSHUA MALINA: The Feuchtwangers hid for two months in the home of a friend before they undertook a hazardous escape: first, on foot over the Pyrenees, and then, by train through Spain. And finally, departing from Lisbon, Lion and Marta were able to sail to America, where they ultimately settled in Los Angeles. By 1943, with his fortunes replenished from his prolific years of writing in the south of France, Lion and Marta bought a house in the affluent LA neighbourhood the Pacific Palisades. They called it Villa Aurora. There, he again gathered a circle of German artists: writers, musicians, and friends who were starting over. And on May 8, 1945, from their home in Los Angeles, Lion and Marta learned of the Allies' victory that ended World War II. If Lion took any comfort in the Soviet Union's role in winning the war, it didn't last long. His ties to Communism and his book *Moscow 1937* came back to haunt him during the Red Scare that began in 1947. It was a period of fierce US repression driven by Cold War panic. Americans were told communist agents were everywhere: in Hollywood, universities, even the government. In that climate, investigations and blacklists flourished, and a single accusation could end a career.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: One of the reasons that Lion came onto the radar of the House Un-American Activities Committee was that he had a long history of writing about Soviet achievements in the Soviet press and although Lion wasn't actually dragged before the HUAC committee, Lion was nevertheless viewed

very much in the context of the quasi-witch hunt. And what this produced was a play, *The Devil in Boston*, which, in true Lion fashion, was a way to draw parallels between the Salem witch hunts and the atmosphere of invasion of private beliefs, hysteria ruthlessly displacing reason and justice that was very apparent during that McCarthy period.

JOSHUA MALINA: Whatever success *The Devil in Boston* found, it didn't change his fortunes; the distrust lingered, and the fallout against him was real.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: The net result for Lion was that he did not get his US citizenship ever. And that had an impact because he didn't feel in a position to move back to Germany because that would have been a closed book in terms of his United States experience. Without citizenship, he could not get back in if he was away for a long period.

JOSHUA MALINA: So despite a deep desire to revisit Germany and his hometown of Munich after the war, Lion never returned to Europe. It was a high price to pay for the opportunity to turn his book into a film. Lion gradually rebuilt the beautiful library of historical classics the Nazis had destroyed when they seized his house in Germany. He continued writing, but none of his later novels reached the commercial success of his earlier books. Though he was not the celebrated author he once had been, he lived in a beautiful, lively home, always open to other artists. Then, at the age of 74, he fell ill with stomach cancer. On December 21st, 1958, he died in Los Angeles. After her husband passed away, Marta was finally granted American citizenship. Able to travel, she worked hard to restore his reputation.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: In 1969, Marta was able to go to the opening of the Lion Feuchtwanger Archive at the Berlin Academy of Arts in West Berlin. And she gave a keynote speech at that opening. That was just one example of the many things she did to keep his reputation going.

JOSHUA MALINA: In recent years, Lion's work has enjoyed a renaissance in Europe, including the much-heralded 2018 release of his diaries in German. But in North America, their publication barely registered. And the Soviet-funded film? It was lost to

time. That is, until 2024, when Lion's work intersected with the research of a contemporary scholar: Miram Chorley-Schulz.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: I first stumbled across the Soviet film adaptation of *The Oppermans*. I found it while deep in my dissertation research on Soviet Yiddish anti-fascism. Suddenly, there was this gem of a film right at the intersection of so many people and ideas I'd been obsessing over for years. I watched it and I was actually quite surprised, not because it existed, which was already surprising, but because it was actually pretty good. We have to remember, right, this is produced in 1938. The genre of film, technology, et cetera, is really not what we have today, of course, right? It was one of those rare moments where all of these different threads from my research, so individuals, ideologies, cultures, came together in one frame. And so it was like finding a puzzle piece. And that puzzle piece turned out to be a little masterpiece in its own right.

JOSHUA MALINA: The Hays Code, which had led to the film's ban in 1938, was long gone, replaced by the movie rating system used today. Eventually, the film entered the public domain, and it was uploaded to Youtube for anyone to enjoy. Still, *The Oppenheim Family* remained available only in Russian—out of reach for English-speaking audiences.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: So I started as an assistant professor at the University of Oregon, and I was lucky to connect with Russian majors who were just as excited as I was to dive into this project. This year, the film will be, thanks to their help, available to English-speaking audiences for the first time in nearly 90 years.

JOSHUA MALINA: Thanks to their work and Miriam's initiative, in December 2025, the Leo Baeck Institute was able to host the film's return to a New York screen almost 90 years after it premiered there.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: Why do I think people need to see this film, both as a viewer and as intellectual historian? What really stands out to me is how

boldly the film stages a critique of fascism in 1938. And of course, this is all thanks already to the novel, which was written in 1933. And so it takes on the fascist assault on democracy, of academic freedom, freedom of speech, and in the great German-Jewish political theorist Hannah Arendt's words, really the assault on thinking itself.

JOSHUA MALINA: Seen today, *The Oppenheim Family* is both a product of fear and an act of resistance, proof that even under the tightest grip of control, people still find ways to speak out against tyranny. Created inside one repressive regime about people resisting another repressive regime, it shows writers, actors, and exiles braving repercussions to keep the idea of humanity alive during a profoundly inhuman decade.

MIRIAM CHORLEY-SCHULTZ: Feuchtwanger has been mostly forgotten. And so, one part of the work that we all need to begin is to rediscover him as a sharp analyst of fascism of the first hour. For him, this was the very purpose of literature, to have a message that is countering the actual propaganda from the power that be. And I think this couldn't be a more urgent call for all of us to pick up Feuchtwanger's work, read it, not passively, but actually kind of let it speak to you so you can start the work for all of us together.

JOSHUA MALINA: One can imagine Lion would be thrilled to know his film is finally being seen—and perhaps, he'd think there's no better moment for us to see it.

ADRIAN FEUCHTWANGER: The purpose of his novels was to prevent sinking into forgetfulness about the past. It's that familiar, even Marxist, warning about, remember the history of your country, remember the history of democracy and its failures. We hear it often, but I do believe it's very important.

THEME MUSIC UP

JOSHUA MALINA: The Lion Feuchtwanger Collection in the LBI Archives contains a small amount of original correspondence and manuscripts for a translation of *Lysistrata* and an essay on the historical consciousness of the Jews. The LBI Library holds first

editions of his works. Lion Feuchtwanger also appears in the extensive papers of his brother, Ludwig, also held by the LBI Archives. Learn more at lbi.org/exile. Exile is a production of the Leo Baeck Institute, New York and Antica Productions. I'm your narrator, Joshua Malina. This episode was written by Joanne O'Sullivan. Our executive producers are Laura Regehr and Stuart Coxe. Our producer is Emily Morantz. Research and translation by Isabella Kempf. Voice acting by Gordon Hecht and Athena Karkanis. Sound design and audio mix by Gaëtan Harris, with additional mixing by Philip Wilson. Theme music by Oliver Wickham. This episode of Exile is made possible in part by a grant from the Conference on Jewish Material Claims Against Germany, which is supported by the German Federal Ministry of Finance and the Foundation Remembrance, Responsibility and Future.

THEME MUSIC OUT