

CHRONICLE

MODERN CINEMA

FILM IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

1918

POLICY

November 9, 1918

To counteract the turmoil in Berlin arising in the wake of the “November Revolution,” Reich Chancellor Max von Baden unilaterally proclaims the abdication of Emperor Wilhelm II and hands over the title of Chancellor to Friedrich Ebert (SPD). The Social Democrat Philipp Scheidemann declares the “German Republic” from the west balcony of the Reichstag. Shortly thereafter, Karl Liebknecht proclaims the “Free Socialist Republic of Germany.” General strike in Berlin

CULTURE

November 30, 1918

Publication of the novel *Der Untertan (Man of Straw)* by Heinrich Mann

December 3, 1918

Founding of the “November Group,” to which the painter Max Pechstein and the architect Erich Mendelsohn belong

1919

POLICY

January 1, 1919

Introduction of the eight-hour workday in the German Reich

January 15, 1919

Assassination of Karl Liebknecht and Rosa Luxemburg, the two most well-known Spartacists, by members of the Rifle Division of the Cavalry Guards

January 19, 1919

Election of the constituent German National Assembly: The Social Democrats win the elections with 37.9 percent. Women are entitled to vote for the first time in Germany.

February 6, 1919

Opening of the constituent German National Assembly: Due to the politically unstable situation in the Reich’s capital of Berlin, the assembly meets in Weimar.

February 11, 1919

Election of the SPD politician Friedrich Ebert as President of the German Reich

June 28, 1919

Signing of the peace treaty by representatives of the German Reich in the Hall of Mirrors of the Palace of Versailles. The terms of the peace treaty are perceived in Germany as one-sided and unjust.

August 11, 1919

President Ebert signs the Weimar Constitution, which becomes effective with its publication in the *Reich Law Gazette* on August 14.

CULTURE

April 1, 1919

Founding of the art school “Staatliches Bauhaus” by Walter Gropius in Weimar

September 18, 1919

Opening of the Ufa-Palast am Zoo in Berlin with roughly 2,000 seats

1920

POLICY

March 13 – 17, 1920

The Kapp Putsch: Officers and Freikorps under the command of the former Generallandschaftsdirektor in Ostpreußen (a high-ranking East Prussian civil servant) Wolfgang Kapp and General Walther von Lüttwitz protest against the considerable reduction of the Reichswehr as a result of the Treaty of Versailles and attempt to take over the government. The coup fails due to resistance from trade unions, civil servants, and workers.

May 12, 1920

Adoption of the Cinema Act, which establishes the legal foundations for film censorship and ends the censorship-free phase that had existed since November 1918

CULTURE

February 26, 1920

Premiere of **DAS CABINET DES DR. CALIGARI** (The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari, directed by Robert Wiene) at the Marmorhaus in Berlin

June 30, 1920

Opening of the First International Dada Fair in Berlin

September 13, 1920

Storm of Steel, Ernst Jünger's descriptions of the war based on his diary entries, is published.

September 30, 1920

Reich President Friedrich Ebert visits the film set of **ANNA BOLEYN** (directed by Ernst Lubitsch) in Berlin-Tempelhof.

1921

POLICY

September 19, 1921

The presidium of the Executive Committee of the Comintern (ECCI) entrusts Willi Münzenberg with the "coordination of the work of the Foreign Committee with the ECCI." Out of the "Famine Relief for Soviet Russia," Münzenberg forms the solidarity network of the Workers International Relief (WIR). Also active under its umbrella is the Artists' Aid Committee, which includes Käthe Kollwitz, George Grosz, and Erwin Piscator.

CULTURE

March 21, 1921

cinema release of the mountain film **DAS WUNDER DES SCHNEESCHUHS, 1. TEIL** (Marvels of the Snowshoe, directed by Arnold Fanck, Deodatus Tauern)

September 24, 1921

Opening of the AVUS (Automobile traffic and training road) in Berlin as the first public road in the world exclusively dedicated to cars

1922

POLICY

June 24, 1922

Assassination of Foreign Minister Walther Rathenau by right-wing extremists of the "Organisation Consul." In response, the Republic Protection Act was enacted on July 21, providing for stricter penalties for actions aimed against the republic.

CULTURE

March 15, 1922

Premiere of **NOSFERATU** (directed by Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau) at the Primus-Palast in Berlin

July 22 – 25, 1922

The First German Workers' Gymnastics and Sports Festival with more than 100,000 participants takes place in Leipzig.

September 17, 1922

First public screening of various short films with integrated optical sound in the Alhambra Hall in Berlin. The response was predominantly negative.

1923

POLICY

January 11, 1923

Belgian and French troops occupy the Ruhr region to secure the delivery of outstanding and future reparations. Prior to this, the French government had accused Germany of not sufficiently fulfilling its reparations obligations. The German government calls for "passive resistance." The troops withdraw in mid-July 1925.

October 15, 1923

Introduction of the Rentenmark: The currency reform by the Stresemann administration stops the hyperinflation of 1923.

November 8 / 9, 1923

The Beer Hall Putsch: In the Bürgerbräukeller in Munich, Adolf Hitler declares the “government of the November criminals in Berlin” dismissed. The following day, the putschists, led by, among others, General Erich Ludendorff, march to the Feldherrnhalle, where the Bavarian State Police suppress the uprising.

CULTURE**February 10, 1923**

Erich Pommer becomes head of all Ufa production operations.

April 24, 1923

Publication of Sigmund Freud’s psychoanalytical work *Das Ich und das Es (The Ego and the Id)* by the Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, Leipzig

1924**POLICY****September 1, 1924**

The Dawes Plan becomes effective: New regulations regarding reparations payments are designed to relieve Germany by making their amount exclusively dependent on the economic capacity of the Reich.

CULTURE**May 1924**

Publication of Béla Balázs’ early film theoretical work *Der sichtbare Mensch oder die Kultur des Films (Visible Man, or the Culture of Film)*

June 22, 1924

The serial killer Fritz Haarmann is arrested in Hanover. In December, he is sentenced to death for the murder of twenty-four boys and young men. The process becomes a media event.

1925**POLICY****February 28, 1925**

Reich President Friedrich Ebert dies of appendicitis and peritonitis.

April 26, 1925

Paul von Hindenburg, erstwhile field marshal of the Imperial Army and former Chief of the Supreme Army Command, is elected President of the German Reich in the second ballot.

October 5 – 16, 1925

At the Locarno Conference, Europe’s leading statesmen gather to negotiate European security policy. With the Locarno Treaties, the states of Germany, Belgium, and France guarantee each other that they will refrain from forcefully altering existing borders.

CULTURE**May 3, 1925**

The avant-garde program *The Absolute Film* is screened at the Ufa cinema on Kurfürstendamm in Berlin.

June 1925

The Ufa attempts to enlist Sigmund Freud for collaboration on the first psychoanalytical film **GEHEIMNISSE EINER SEELE** (Secrets of a Soul, directed by Georg Wilhelm Pabst). Freud declines.

September 17, 1925

First edition of the newsreel series **UFA-WOCHENSCHAU**, a fusion of the **DEULIG-WOCHE** and the **MESSTER-WOCHE**

December 19, 1925

Willi Münzenberg founds the “Prometheus-Film-Verleih und Vertriebs-GmbH” for the distribution of Soviet films in Germany. From 1926 onwards, the company would produce its own feature films and documentaries.

1926**POLICY****September 10, 1926**

Germany becomes a member of the League of Nations and is also given a permanent seat in the most important organ of the organization, the League of Nations Council.

CULTURE**January 1926**

At his solo exhibition in the Kunsthalle in Dresden, Marcel Breuer presents the tubular steel armchair “B 3” (later known as the “Wassily Armchair”), which he designed at the Bauhaus in Dessau. This marks the beginning of a modern interior design style with clear, simple lines.

March 18, 1926

Soviet director Sergej M. Eisenstein visits the film sets of Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau’s **FAUST** and Fritz Lang’s **METROPOLIS**.

March 24, 1926

The film **BRONENOSETS POTYOMKIN / BATTLESHIP POTEMKIN** (1925) by Sergej M. Eisenstein is banned by the supervisory headquarters of the Film Review Office in Berlin; the film may only be shown in the German Reich after cuts and alterations.

July 4, 1926

The architectural collective “Der Ring,” dedicated to Neues Bauen, is founded in Berlin. Members include Walter Gropius, Erich Mendelsohn, and Mies van der Rohe.

August 24, 1926

After a victory over Max Dieckmann in the Lunapark in Berlin, Max Schmeling becomes the German champion in the light heavyweight segment.

1927**POLICY****January 29, 1927**

The centrist politician Wilhelm Marx becomes Reich Chancellor for the fourth time. The hopes of the German National People’s Party (DNVP) for government participation are fulfilled with the formation of the new “Citizens’ Bloc” administration comprising the DNVP, the German People’s Party (DVP), the Bavarian People’s Party (BVP), the German Centre Party (Zentrum) and the German Democratic Party (DDP).

July 7, 1927

Adoption of the Placement Services and Unemployment Insurance Act: The law transforms unemployment assistance into insurance. Employees and employers must now pay equal shares into the insurance scheme.

CULTURE**January 10, 1927**

Premiere of **METROPOLIS** (directed by Fritz Lang) at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo in Berlin. The film, the most expensive German production to date, flops at the box office.

March 28, 1927

The media magnate and DNVP politician Alfred Hugenberg becomes the new chairman of the supervisory board of Ufa. At his request, Ludwig Klitzsch, the head of Scherl-Verlag, becomes the new Director General of Ufa.

May 25, 1927

Clärenore Stinnes is the first woman to start a two-year circumnavigation of the world in the “Adler Standard 6” limousine.

June 18, 1927

Opening of the “Nürburgring” test and racetrack

September 18, 1927

Inauguration of the Tannenberg Memorial near Hohenstein in East Prussia by Reich President Paul von Hindenburg

September 23, 1927

Premiere of **BERLIN. DIE SINFONIE DER GROBSTADT (BERLIN: SYMPHONY OF A GREAT CITY)**, directed by Walther Ruttmann

1928**POLICY****March 25, 1928**

A majority in the Reichstag votes for the construction of the Battleship A. This military project is highly contentious and leads to a government crisis.

CULTURE**May 23, 1928**

Fritz von Opel's first rocket-powered racing car is tested on the AVUS racetrack. The car "Opel RAK2" reaches a speed of more than 230 km/h.

August 31, 1928

Premiere of Bertolt Brecht's *The Three Penny Opera* with music by Kurt Weill at the Theater am Schiffbauerdamm in Berlin

September 15, 1928

Opening of the Universum cinema (today: Schaubühne), designed by Erich Mendelsohn, on Lehniner Platz in Berlin

October 11, 1928

The recently completed dirigible LZ 127 "Graf Zeppelin" takes off from Friedrichshafen for a flight to the USA. After a non-stop flight of more than 111 hours, it lands in Lakehurst, New Jersey on October 15.

1929**POLICY****May 1–3, 1929**

"Blutmai" (Bloody May): Despite a ban on demonstrations, bloody clashes with the police take place at the rallies organized by the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in Berlin. The balance of these days: thirty-three dead and roughly 200 injured

June 7, 1929

Signing of the Young Plan for the new regulation of German reparations payments

October 3, 1929

Foreign Minister Gustav Stresemann dies following a stroke.

October 25, 1929

"Black Friday" in the USA: A dramatic collapse on the New York Stock Exchange triggers a world economic crisis.

CULTURE**March 11, 1929**

Premiere of the silent film *ASPHALT* (directed by Joe May) at the Ufa-Palast am Zoo in Berlin

March 12, 1929

Premiere of the first feature-length German sound film *MELODIE DER WELT* (Melody of the World, directed by Walther Ruttmann) at the Mozart Hall in Berlin

May 18, 1929

Opening of the International Exhibition of the German Werkbund "Film und Foto" (FiFo) in the Städtische Ausstellungshallen, Stuttgart: For the first time, the two media of film and photo are presented equally.

June 21, 1929

Opening of the newly built Karstadt building on Hermannplatz in Berlin: With 72,000 square meters on nine floors (two of which are underground), it is the largest department store in the German Reich.

October 1929

Alfred Döblin's novel *Berlin Alexanderplatz* is published.

December 10, 1929

Thomas Mann receives the Nobel Prize for Literature for his novel *Buddenbrooks*.

1930**POLICY****March 30, 1930**

Heinrich Brüning becomes Reich Chancellor. The first presidential cabinet of the Weimar Republic is formed under the centrist politician. A gradual purging of parliament and government through emergency ordinances begins.

September 14, 1930

“Landslide victory”: In the Reichstag election, the National Socialist German Workers’ Party (NSDAP) registers an increase from 2.6 percent (1928) to 18.3 percent of the votes, thus becoming the second strongest faction.

CULTURE

April 1, 1930

Premiere of the Ufa sound film **DER BLAUE ENGEL** (The Blue Angel, directed by Josef von Sternberg) with Marlene Dietrich in the leading role at the Gloria-Palast in Berlin

December 4, 1930

The anti-war film **ALL QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT** (directed by Lewis Milestone) is screened in the Mozart Hall in Berlin and triggers the most momentous film scandal of the Weimar Republic. National Socialist riots prevent further screenings. Under pressure from the public, the film is banned by censors.

1931

POLICY

April 15, 1931

Large women’s rally at the Sportpalast in Berlin against Paragraph 218, which penalizes abortion; among them is the screenwriter Thea von Harbou.

October 11, 1931

On the initiative of Alfred Hugenberg, right-wing national parties and organizations such as the DNVP and NSDAP, as well as their paramilitary forces Stahlhelm and Sturmabteilung (SA), join forces at a common rally in Bad Harzburg to form a “national opposition” in an effort to obtain the resignation of the government under Heinrich Brüning.

CULTURE

March 9, 1931

Charles Chaplin visits Berlin and is greeted euphorically at the Friedrichstrasse train station.

July 31, 1931

First ascent of the north face of the Matterhorn by Franz and Toni Schmid

December 2, 1931

The film adaptation of Erich Kästner’s novel *Emil and the Detectives* (directed by Gerhard Lamprecht) premieres in Berlin. Billie Wilder wrote the script for the film.

1932

POLICY

February 1932

With over six million, the number of unemployed persons reaches a historic high.

June 1, 1932

The centrist politician Franz von Papen becomes the new Reich Chancellor.

July 20, 1932

With the “Prussian coup,” the Reich administration dismisses the executive Social Democrat government in Prussia. Public authority in the largest state of the Weimar Republic is thus transferred to the Reich administration – a decisive step towards the centralization of power.

July 31, 1932

With over thirty-seven percent of the votes, the NSDAP becomes the strongest party in the Reichstag elections.

December 3, 1932

General Kurt von Schleicher is appointed the new Reich Chancellor and charged with the formation of a new cabinet.

CULTURE

May 14, 1932

Premiere of **KUHLE WAMPE ODER WEM GEHÖRT DIE WELT?** (Kuhle Wampe or Who Owns the World?, directed by Slatan Dudow; the screenplay was largely written by Bertolt Brecht) in Moscow

August 6, 1932

The Lord Mayor of Cologne, Konrad Adenauer, opens the first German motorway; it runs between Cologne and Bonn.

1933

POLICY

January 30, 1933

Reich President Paul von Hindenburg, who had been reelected the previous year, appoints Adolf Hitler as Reich Chancellor. On the occasion of the “assumption of power,” tens of thousands of members of the Sturmabteilung (SA), the Schutzstaffel (SS), and the Stahlhelm parade through the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin with a torchlight procession.