

Chancellor Franz von Papen Addresses the Public before the Reparations Conference in Lausanne (June 1932)

Abstract

This clip from a June 1932 *Deulig-Tonwoche* newsreel focused on Reich Chancellor Franz von Papen as he prepared for the start of the Lausanne Reparations Conference with Britain and France on June 16. In the excerpt, Papen explained his government's position by addressing the camera directly, a technological novelty at the time, since the Deulig film company had just begun producing sound newsreels earlier that year. Papen, a political novice who had assumed the chancellorship a mere two weeks earlier, faced a major diplomatic challenge in Lausanne, as he sought to renegotiate the reparations payments that the victorious Allies had imposed on Germany at the end of the First World War. Earlier conferences had already helped to ease and better facilitate the payments, and the Young Plan, concluded just two years earlier, had set German payments to the Allies at 36 billion Reichsmarks in total. The global economic crisis, however, had compelled the Allies to temporarily suspend payments the following year, in 1931, with the so-called "Hoover Moratorium." The German delegation under Papen in Lausanne wanted to go even further and sought to abolish reparations payments altogether and to expunge the Treaty of Versailles's "war guilt clause" that ascribed responsibility for the war to Germany alone. Papen managed at the conference to negotiate an end to annual reparations in exchange for a one-time payment of 3 billion Reichsmarks, but France and Britain made that agreement contingent on a separate arrangement between those two countries and the United States on the war debt that *they* owed the Americans. Given that no such arrangement materialized, none of the three participants in the Lausanne Conference ever ratified the concluding treaty, and Germany never made that lump-sum payment. The Nazi Party and its far-right DNVP allies had, in any event, already started criticizing the Lausanne Agreement as soon as the ink had dried, given its failure to eliminate the Versailles Treaty's "war guilt clause" and restrictions on the German military.

Source

In the honest struggle for Germany's fate, which is at the same time the fate of the whole world, the German delegation in Lausanne knows itself as one with the united and firm will of the entire German people. Too often have the hopes of nations been disappointed. Too often have decisions been postponed. These methods have brought ever greater misfortune upon Germany and the world. The responsible statesmen in Lausanne must arrive at a result that, in clear recognition of the equal rights and equal duties of all states in the world, restores peace.

Only a peace that reconciles the interests of each individual people with the common good can endure. Germany's fate is the fate of the world. German adversity is the world's adversity. The prosperity of individual nations is the prosperity of the whole. The work of the responsible statesmen in Lausanne must pave the way for positive cooperation, which alone can lead us towards a better future.

Speaker: The reparations conference in Lausanne. After a press conference, the national delegates leave the Hotel Beau Rivage: Hérriot, MacDonald, on the left Reich Chancellor von Papen.

Source: *Deuligton-Woche* No. 25, 1932. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv Filmwerk ID: 57507,
<https://digitaler-lesesaal.bundesarchiv.de/en/video/57507/666146>

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Recommended Citation: Chancellor Franz von Papen Addresses the Public before the Reparations Conference in Lausanne (June 1932), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:video-5188>> [March 16, 2026].