

“Crisis Years”: Clips from German Newsreels (1930-1932)

Abstract

This compilation of segments from various weekly German newsreels between 1930 and 1932 reveals how film companies presented to cinemagoers some of the challenges that the Weimar Republic faced during those years of peak unemployment and parliamentary deadlock. In addition to highlighting problems such as the housing shortage and bank closures, however, reports also called the public's attention to anti-war demonstrations in Berlin, for instance, and to the larger threat to global peace posed by the arms buildup. The year 1932 proved an especially pivotal one, when around 5.6 million Germans registered as unemployed (about 29.9 percent of the total labor force), with an estimated 2 million more out-of-work people who did not even feel it worth their while to register. Foreign lenders withdrew their money from Germany or did not renew their loans. Numerous banks ran into financial difficulties, were forced to close and refuse transactions, partly because many customers wanted to withdraw their money at once. In order to convince the victorious powers of World War I that Germany was unable to make further reparations payments, the Reich government temporarily exacerbated the situation by raising taxes and cutting wages and social benefits. Beginning with Chancellor Brüning, who did not have a parliamentary majority, the Reich Chancellors ruled by emergency decree, bypassing parliament. They had the approval of Reich President Hindenburg to do so. Parliament thus lost its actual functions, namely legislation and control of the government, and as a consequence it met less and less frequently. The election campaign in June and July 1932 was the most brutal in German history, with armed street fighting occurring almost daily and politically motivated murders being committed by both the right and the left.

Source

Germany in Distress

[newspaper headlines about emergency decrees]

[signs announcing banks remaining closed as ordered by the latest emergency decree]

Intertitles:

Collapse of the German Civil Servants' Bank in Berlin

[Handwritten sign: The bank is closed. No withdrawals can be made.]

An atmosphere of crisis in The Hague. The delegates of the powers with the greatest stake in the matter, Snowden, Briand, and Stresemann, on their way to the conference.

We are doing fine? Signs of the housing shortage: circus artists who have found shelter in an old airplane

[Negotiations] about our money. The Paris Tribute Conference during the session...

...about which Dr. Schacht reported to the government.

Report on the change in government. The new government cabinet

Reich Chancellor Dr. Brüning

Dr. Böß in America. When this footage was shot, Berlin's Lord Mayor was still unaware of the Sklarek matter.

The highest honor for a writer. Thomas Mann was awarded this year's Nobel Prize for Literature.

On the anniversary of the outbreak of war. Anti-war demonstrations in Berlin's Lustgarten

The wounds caused by the war have not yet healed

America honors its invalids on this day

Is this disarmament? How things are looking across the world - 14 years after the most devastating war of all times was ended

[footage of military parades in the United States, London, and Moscow]

The anti-war movement. Anti-war demonstration in Berlin on August 1.

In Frankfurt (on the Main) participants from all over the world gathered for an anti-imperialist congress

Source: *Emelka Wochenschau* (edited), 1930. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv Filmwerk ID: 26340

BArch

Recommended Citation: "Crisis Years": Clips from German Newsreels (1930-1932), published in: German History in Documents and Images, <<https://germanhistorydocs.org/en/weimar-germany-1918-1933/ghdi:video-5230>> [March 16, 2026].