

***Hunger in Waldenburg* (Phil Jutzi, 1929)**

Curated by Paul Dobryden

The documents in this dossier provide context for *Hunger in Waldenburg*, a semi-documentary report on living and working conditions in the Silesian coal mining town of Waldenburg (now Wałbrzych, Poland). Juxtaposing the surrounding landscapes with the soot and smoke produced by coal mining, *Hunger in Waldenburg* is not only a document of class immiseration but of the environmental consequences of industrialization. The texts include a journalistic account of the situation in Waldenburg by Leo Lania, the writer who would go on to make *Hunger in Waldenburg* in collaboration with director Phil Jutzi; a censorship official's judgment of the film and various reactions to it; and a number of reviews.

Hunger in Waldenburg was produced under the auspices of the Volksverband für Filmkunst, a leftist film club that dabbled in financing its own movies, with assistance from the Filmkartell 'Weltfilm,' one of the numerous production companies started by the young Communist media specialist Willi Münzenberg. Like other films made in this milieu, *Hunger in Waldenburg* deals with modern problems of concern to the working class, such as dangerous and unhygienic working conditions, unemployment, and lack of adequate food and housing. Its setting is unique, however; where similar films documented Germany's urban industrial centers, *Hunger in Waldenburg* turns the camera on the country's eastern periphery. In Silesia, an economically subjugated region for centuries and a site of periodic uprisings, older and newer forms of capitalist extraction co-existed with neither providing a sustainable livelihood for the working-class population. Lania's 1925 report sketches the region's history and current circumstances, serving as a journalistic template for the 1929 film.

Reviewers remarked on *Hunger in Waldenburg*'s rejection of artifice; the film is grounded in documentary sequences, while its staged scenes employ non-professional actors and are meant to demonstrate typical situations and conflicts. Reviews also noted the influence of Soviet filmmaking and thematized the connection between politics, on the one hand, and narrative and filmic form, on the other. For some, the removal of particular intertitles by censors was further evidence of the state's hypocritical and unfair treatment of leftist media--a question that would arise again in the case of Slatan Dudow's *Kuhle Wampe* in 1932. Others asked how political a film that documented the verifiably awful circumstances in Waldenburg actually was; whether a less "tendentious" message would have found wider public acceptance; and whether its bleak ending mobilized audiences or led them to despair.

More information about and analysis of *Hunger in Waldenburg* can be found in chapter 5 of my book *The Hygienic Apparatus: Weimar Cinema and Environmental Disorder* (Northwestern University Press, 2022).

Films for comparison

Zeitprobleme. Wie der Arbeiter wohnt (*How the Berlin Worker Lives*, Slatan Dudow, 1930)

Kuhle Wampe, oder wem gehört die Welt? (*Kuhle Wampe*, Slatan Dudow, 1932)

Mutter Krausens Fahrt ins Glück (*Mother Krausen's Journey to Happiness*, Phil Jutzi, 1929)

Die Weber (*The Weavers*, Friedrich Zelnik, 1927)

Metropolis (Fritz Lang, 1926)