



PROFESSOR MAMLOCK

Friedrich Wolf (1888 – 1953): Biographical Information and Images

CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH IN NEUWIED ON THE RHINE

Dec 23, 1888 Friedrich Wolf born to a Jewish merchant family in Neuwied on the Rhine.



Friedrich Wolf in 1893.

1894 Attends the Jewish Primary School in Neuwied.

1899 – 1907 Attends the Royal Prussian Secondary School in Neuwied.



Physical education includes rowing, swimming, gymnastics and hiking. He is interested in Goethe, Schiller, Rousseau, Haeckel, Kropotkin, Nietzsche and the ancient world. Wolf writes his first poems.

UNIVERSITY YEARS

1907 Medical studies (in Tübingen, Bonn, Berlin). Studies in Philosophy (in Bonn, Berlin) and Art History (in Munich, Berlin).

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Gymnastics with Heinrich Friedemann.

1908 Wolf joins the *Wandervogel* movement.
Walking tour in Italy.

1912 State Medical Examination. Thesis on *Multiple Sclerosis in Childhood*.
Assistant doctor in Meißen, Dresden and Bonn.



Friedrich Wolf and the first patient he operated on.

1913 Postdoctoral studies and medical licensing.
Resigns from the Jewish religious community.
Writes poems, short stories and his first attempts at drama.
Enthusiastic fan of the Deutsches Theater in Berlin.
Doctor on Norddeutschland Lloyd ocean liners; trips to Canada, USA and Greenland.

FIRST WORLD WAR

1914 Marriage to Kaethe Gumpold.
Becomes a military doctor on the Western front; becomes a committed pacifist in response to the death and suffering he sees there.

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Senior physician Dr. Friedrich Wolf at the front.

- 1917** While at the front, writes poems, the novels *Der gekrümmte Arm* and *Langemark*, and the anti-war play "Mohammed."
- 1918** Becomes a conscientious objector, a doctor at a Dresden military hospital and a member of a Worker's and Soldier's Council.

DRESDEN, REMSCHEID, WORPSWEDE, HECHINGEN

- 1919** His expressionist drama "Das bist du" is a huge success at the Dresdener Schauspielhaus. Writes the expressionist drama "Der Unbedingte."
- 1920** Becomes a city doctor in Remscheid.
Participates in the fight against the Kapp Putsch.
- 1921** Lives at the Barkenhoff commune, part of the artists' colony in Worpswede.
Country doctor in Hechingen.
Lives with farmers in the Swabian Alps.
Self-directed study of natural medicine.
Writes the play "Die schwarze Sonne."
- 1922** Annulment of marriage to Kaethe Wolf, née Gumpold. Daughter Johanna (b. 1915) and son Lukas (b. 1919) are from this marriage.
Wolf marries Else Dreibold. Sons Markus (b. 1923) and Konrad (b. 1925) are from this marriage.
Close to the Civil Youth Movement in the Stuttgart area. Great social engagement.

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Friedrich Wolf with Else and their children, Markus and Konrad.

1923 Writes the drama “Der Arme Konrad” in Hechingen; it is his breakthrough as a playwright and is performed at many theaters. (A version directed by Gerd Keil was filmed for GDR television in 1966).

Writes the play “Die Schrankkomödie.”

1924 Writes a Jewish folk epic, *Das Heldenepos des Alten Bundes*.



Performance of “Der arme Konrad” at the Volksbühne at Lützowplatz in Berlin, 1924.

“ART IS A WEAPON!”

1925-1927 Writes the plays “Kolonne Hund” (1926) and “Koritke” (1927), and the novels *Kreatur* (1925) and *Kampf im Kohlenpott* (1927). After three years work, he finishes his medical compendium, *Die Natur als Arzt und Helfer* (1927).

1927 Moves to Stuttgart and opens a private practice for homeopathy and natural medicine.

1928 Wolf joins the KPD (German Communist Party). He gives the speech “Art is a Weapon!” at a meeting of the Arbeiter Theaterbund Deutschland (German Workers’ Theater Union). He becomes a member of the Bund proletarisch-revolutionärer Schriftsteller (Union of Proletarian-Revolutionary Writers).

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Title page of the first edition of his speech, 1928.

1929

With his play "Cyankali" he champions the campaign against § 218, the paragraph banning abortion that has been in the Criminal Code since 1871. The play makes him known all over Europe.



Poster for the film version of Wolf's play "Cyankali;" directed by Hans Tintner. It premiered on May 23, 1930. GDR television also produced a film version in 1977 (dir. Juri Kramer).

1930

His play "Die Matrosen von Cattaro" is published. (A performance of the play by the East German Maxim Gorki Theater was filmed for GDR television in 1958).

1931

Wolf is accused of performing "compensated abortions" and arrested, but released after mass protests.

Visits the Soviet Union for the first time at the invitation of the Soviet People's Commissar for Health Services.

Participates in the Writers' Congress of the Russian Federation.

Performance of "Die Matrosen von Cattaro" in Moscow. Premiere of the antifascist comedy "Die Jungens von Mons."

1932

Founding of the Schauspieltrupp Südwest theater company. Wolf writes agitprop texts for the group.

Second visit to the Soviet Union.

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EXILE AND SECOND WORLD WAR

1933

Wolf must leave Germany. Lives in Austria and Switzerland, before settling in France. He begins work on the play "Professor Mamlock" en route and finishes it on the Ile de Bréhat, in France. The German theater collective Truppe 31 intends to stage the play, but this never takes place.

Wolf is in contact with the Theatre Union about staging "Professor Mamlock" in New York.



Performance of "Professor Mamlock" (venue and date unknown).

1934

Wolf and his family leave France for exile in Moscow.

Birth of his daughter Lena, to mother Lotte Rayß, in Basel.

"Professor Mamlock," "Bauer Baetz," "Floridsdorf" and "Das trojanische Pferd" are performed at theaters in the Soviet Union.

The play "Professor Mamlock" premieres at the Kaminski Theater in Warsaw (in Yiddish), at the Habimah Theater in Tel Aviv (in Hebrew) and at the Schauspielhaus in Zurich (in German).

Participation in the First Soviet Writers' Congress in Moscow, Aug 17 – Sept 1. Wolf speaks on "Fascist and Antifascist Dramaturgy."

Dec. 10, 1934: New York premiere of "Die Matrosen von Cattaro" (English translation by Keene Wallis, dir. Irving Gordon). *The New York Times* calls the Theatre Union's production at the Civic Repertory Theatre "sensational."



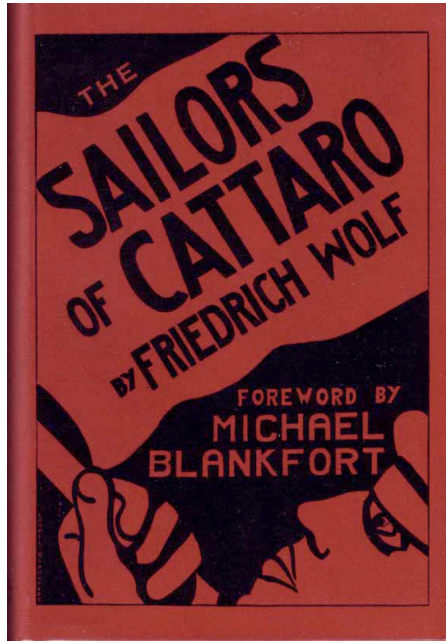
Friedrich Wolf with his sons Markus and Konrad (1935, location unknown).

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1935

April 26-28, participation and speech at the First American Writers' Congress in New York. This congress discusses the relation of the writer to public life and the fascist threat; it also establishes the League of American Writers (dissolves in 1942).

On June 11, the Nazis strip Wolf of his German citizenship. Also on the list are Bertolt Brecht and Erika Mann.



First edition of the play, designed by Laurie Blankfort.

Samuel French (New York) publishes "Die Matrosen von Cattaro" in the USA under the title "The Sailors of Cattaro: a play in 2 acts based on a mutiny in the Austrian Navy in 1918."

Oprecht Verlagshaus (Zurich) releases the first printed edition of "Professor Mamlock" under the title "Doktor Mamlocks Ausweg. Tragödie der westlichen Demokratie." In the USA, Universum Publishers and Distributors publish "Professor Mamlock: a play," translated by Anne Bromberger.

"Professor Mamlock" premieres worldwide between 1935 and 1945. Planned 1935 premiere at the Westminster Theatre in London is cancelled due to pressure from the British Foreign Office, but takes place in 1939.

1936

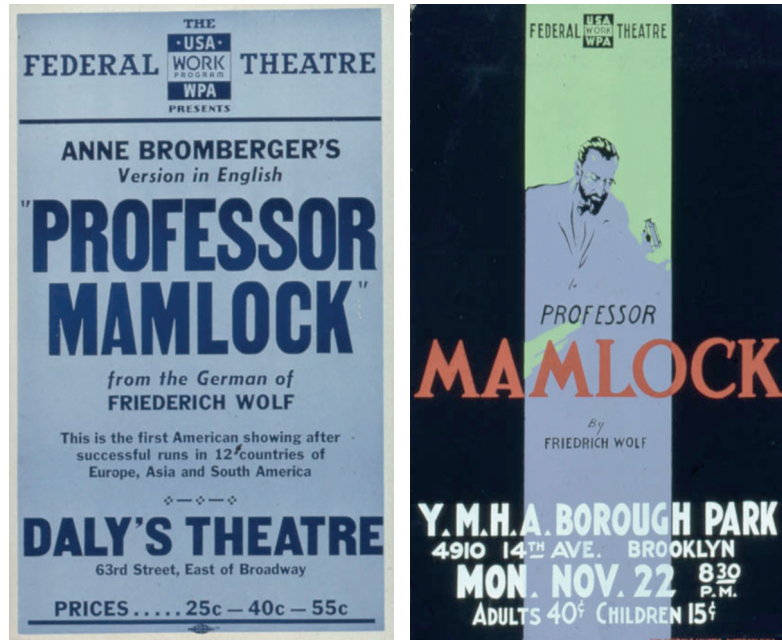
Lecture tour in Scandinavia.

1937

Officials in Leningrad drop "Die Matrosen von Cattaro" for the repertoire for being "defeatist and anti-revolutionary."

The Federal Theatre (USA Work Program – WPA) premieres "Professor Mamlock" at Daly's Theatre in New York on April 13, 1937.

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Posters from the Special Collection & Archives of George Mason University Libraries.

Wolf flees to France to escape the threat of arrest in Moscow.

1938

Unsuccessfully attempts to join the international brigades in Spain; remains in France.

Writes the novel *Zwei an der Grenze* and the play "Das Schiff auf der Donau."

Soviet film version of the play, entitled *Professor Mamlok* (dirs. Herbert Rappaport and Adolf Minkin), is released with 300 film copies in the Soviet Union. The US premiere of the film takes place at the Cameo cinema in New York on Nov. 7.

Writes two Hollywood film exposés—*Der Soldat Gottes* (about pastor Martin Niemöller) and *The Forgotten Ship* (about a refugee ship)—but they are rejected.

1939

WWII begins with German invasion of Poland on 9/1/1939.

French government arrests Wolf as a "hostile foreigner" and detains him in French camps, including at Le Vernet in the Ariège.

At Le Vernet, writes play "Beaumarchais oder Die Geburt des 'Figaro.'"



Friedrich Wolf at the Le Vernet camp.

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- 1940** Birth of his daughter Kati, to mother Ruth Hermann, in Sanary-sur-Mer.
- 1941** Released from the Le Vernet camp after Soviet officials intervene; returns to his family in Moscow. Joins the war as an agitator and propagandist with the Soviet army.
- 1942** Writes the play "Patrioten" and the novella *Der Russenpelz*. (The East German DEFA Film Studio produced an adaptation of this novella in 1985 under the title *Das Haus am Fluss*, dir. by Roland Gräf).
- 1943** Co-founder and front commissioner of the National Committee for Free Germany. Lectures at the "Antifa" School for German Prisoners of War in Krasnogorsk, USSR.



Erich Weinert signs the founding document for the "Antifa" School; Friedrich Wolf is standing on the right. (Antifa is short for antifascist.)



Friedrich Wolf and the German journalist and politician Heinrich Graf von Einsiedel.

- 1944** Writes the novel *Heimkehr der Söhne*, and two plays: "Dr. Lilli Wanner" and "Was der Mensch säet."

RETURN TO GERMANY

- 1945** Returns to Berlin at the end of the war, becomes actively engaged in cultural-political activities.

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1946 Co-founds the DEFA Film Studio in the Soviet Occupied Sector and the Bund Deutscher Volksbühnen (Union of German People's Theaters); writes for the satirical paper *Ulenspiegel* under the pseudonym Dr. Isegrimm.

German premiere of "Professor Mamlock" at the Hebbel Theater in Berlin on January 9, 1946.

1947 Writes two plays, "Wie die Tiere des Waldes" and "Die letzte Probe."

Aufbau publishes a first collection of stories for children *Märchen für grosse und kleine Kinder*; an extended edition also includes the famous *Die Weihnachtsgans Auguste*. This story became the basis for theater and audio versions, as well as several film adaptations: a short feature film *Peterle und die Weihnachtsgans Auguste* (1964, dir. Rainer Simon); a 1984 animation film by Günter Rätz; and a 1988 GDR television version by Bodo Fürneisen.



Käthe Reichel and Dietrich Körner in the 1988 TV adaptation of Wolf's story "Die Weihnachtsgans Auguste."

1948 Becomes chairman of the Union of German People's Theaters, editor of the magazine *Kunst und Volk*, and co-founder of the German section of PEN.

Moves to Lehnitz.



Friedrich Wolf with his dog Bummi at the house in Lehnitz.

1949 Co-writes the screenplay for *Der Rat der Götter* (*Council of the Gods*) and writes the comic drama "Bürgermeister Anna."

Appointed head of the GDR Diplomatic Mission to the People's Republic of Poland.

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1950 – 1951 Appointed GDR Ambassador to Poland.



Friedrich Wolf, first GDR Ambassador to Poland.

1950 Co-founds the German Academy of Arts in East Berlin; co-chairman of the German Writers' Association.

Writes the poem "Lilo Herrmann" (musical version composed by Paul Dessau). Premiere of two DEFA films based on Wolf's scripts: *Bürgermeister Anna* (dir. Hans Müller) and *Der Rat der Götter* (dir. Kurt Maetzig).



Original film poster for Council of the Gods.

1952 Writes the novel *Menetekel oder Die fliegenden Untertassen* and the play "Thomas Münzer."

1953 Lectures on "Meisterschaft und Volkstümlichkeit" ("Masterpieces for the People") on the occasion of the 125th anniversary of the Reclam publishing house.

Writes film scenario for DEFA film adaptation, *Thomas Müntzer*.

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Image from film adaptation of Thomas Müntzer (dir. Martin Hellberg), which premiered May 17, 1956.

1953

Birth of his son Thomas, to mother Irmgard Schaaf, in Dresden.

Oct 5, 1953

Friedrich Wolf dies of a heart attack at home in Lehnitz. He is buried at the Friedrichsfelde central cemetery in Berlin.

We thank Thomas Naumann and the Friedrich Wolf Gesellschaft for making information and images available for the DVD release of *Professor Mamlock* (dir. Konrad Wolf).