

MARRIAGE IN THE SHADOWS



The Gottschalks in the Shadow of Nazi Cultural Policies: Timeline

1927–1928

Actor Joachim Gottschalk joins the touring theater group Württembergische Volksbühne Stuttgart, where he meets the actress Meta Wolff. He works with this troupe for two seasons before signing a contract with the theater in Zwickau.

May 1931–early 1932

Meta Wolff, who works at the theater in Halberstadt, and Joachim Gottschalk get married on May 3, 1930. Meta, who is Jewish, converts to Protestantism for her husband's sake. In the fall of 1931, Joachim is engaged at the theater in Leipzig; at the beginning of 1932, Meta resigns her contract in order to join him.

January 30, 1933

Adolf Hitler, head of the National Socialist German Workers (or Nazi) Party, is appointed Chancellor of the German Reich.

February 19, 1933

Joachim and Meta Gottschalk's son Michael is born.

February 27–28, 1933

In Berlin, the dome of the Reichstag burns. The Nazis use this event to legalize arresting up and prosecuting their political opponents. Approximately 30,000 to 40,000 mainly leftwing opponents of the Nazi government emigrate to France and Czechoslovakia in the first weeks after the Nazis take power; many of them will later have to leave these countries for other places in the world, including the USSR, USA, Mexico and Palestine.

March 13, 1933

Hitler creates the Reich Ministry of Propaganda and People's Enlightenment, responsible for all aspects of political propaganda and mass communication. Josef Goebbels is appointed Propaganda Minister.

March 28, 1933

Goebbels is now also responsible for film at the Ministry of Inner and Foreign Affairs. He gives his first programmatic speech on the future of German film, which he sees as a very important political medium, to be kept under strict state control.

April 7, 1933

The Reich Civil Service Law passes. It reestablishes a national civil service and bans all professionals who are non-Aryans or political opponents of the Nazi regime, including teachers, lawyers, doctors and artists.

May 10, 1933

Book burning in Berlin and many other large German cities. In Berlin, Goebbels declares that "un-German" books by Jewish, socialist and democratic authors have no place in German culture and must be destroyed and banned; a year later, about 3000 titles are banned.

MARRIAGE IN THE SHADOWS

By now, over 250 authors have already emigrated, including: Bertolt Brecht (2/33: Denmark; 4/39: Sweden-Finland; 5/41: USA), Arnold Zweig (1933: Czechoslovakia-Switzerland-France-Palestine), Thomas Mann (1933: Switzerland; 1939: USA), Anna Seghers (1933: France; 1941: Mexico), Lion Feuchtwanger (1933: France; 10/40: USA) and Friedrich Wolf (1933: Austria-Switzerland-France; 1934: Soviet Union).

September 22, 1933

Founding of the Reich Culture Chamber—at the instigation of Goebbels, who becomes its head—to fulfill the Nazi policy of *Gleichschaltung* (lit. national consolidation and coordination of institutions) in the sectors of culture and art. The Chamber condemns various modern art movements in all domains, including cubism, expressionism, impressionism, surrealism, the new objectivity, etc.

Affiliated with the Ministry of Propaganda, the Chamber consists of seven subsidiary chambers, representing the individual arts and related businesses—film, visual arts/architecture, music, theater, literature, print media and radio. To get work, artists and artistic professionals must now be members of one of the seven chambers; to become a member, however, they must present certificates of Aryan heritage and be considered ‘politically reliable.’

1933

The Cultural Association of German Jews is founded; in 1935, it is renamed the Jewish Cultural Association. The Nazis authorize the Association as a means to camouflage the impact of the new legislation on Jewish artists. Nearly 2,000 Jewish artists who have been fired become members; the number ultimately grows to 70,000.

October 1, 1933

The Cultural Association of German Jews opens their Jewish Kulturbund Theater Company in Berlin with the premiere of Lessing’s play *Nathan the Wise* (dir. Karl Loewenberg). Kulturbund members will include, the actors Martin Brandt (1933-39) and Camilla Spira Eisner (1935-38) and theater director Fritz Jessner (1934-36), among others.

February 1934

Joachim Gottschalk is hired by the Frankfurter Bühnen theater, having shown his Aryan certificate. Because his wife was born Jewish, he requires a Special Performance Permit from the Ministry of Propaganda and People’s Enlightenment.

September 15, 1935

The Nazi Party congress unanimously approves the Nuremberg Laws, which: codify clear definitions of who is Jewish; deprive Jews of German citizenship; and prohibit marriage between Jews and non-Jewish Germans. More Jewish artists lose employment, leading to another wave of emigration.

May 9, 1936

Like all civil servants in Frankfurt, Joachim Gottschalk must attest to a vote of confidence in Hitler. Although Nazi officials demand that he be removed from the theater, he manages to keep his job in Frankfurt until January 1938.

1937

Nationalization of the German film industry, which is now completely controlled by Nazis and their networks. Goebbels directs a holding company to buy stocks in German film production companies. He acquires Ufa, the largest one, and in 1942 merges it with the remaining companies: Terra Film, Tobis, Bavaria Film, Wien-Film and Berlin-Film.

MARRIAGE IN THE SHADOWS

May 14, 1937

Schiller's Die Verschwörung des Fiesco zu Genua (dir. Richard Weichert) premieres at Berlin's Volksbühne. As a guest actor, Joachim Gottschalk performs the leading role to great acclaim.

July 19, 1937

The Degenerate Art exhibiton opens in Munich; it presents 650 artworks confiscated from 32 German museums. The show vilifies "degenerate" artworks that challenge Nazi arts policy, exhibiting them in a skillfully anti-aesthetic presentation with defamatory commentary. Included are works by modern artists, including: Ernst Ludwig Kirchner, Ernst Barlach, Max Pechstein, Paul Klee, Otto Dix, Max Ernst, Max Beckmann, Erich Heckel and Franz Marc.

August 1937

Records indicate that by this time a total of 15,997 works of fine art designated as "degenerate" have been confiscated from 101 German museums. This is retroactively justified by the passage of the Law on the Confiscation of Products of Degenerate Art on 31 May 1938. Affected are classical modern and socially critical works, as well as works by artists of Jewish descent.

December 17, 1937

The Frankfurt theater director receives a strongly-worded letter from the Propaganda Department of the Hesse-Nassau "Gau" (or district), expressing outrage at Joachim Gottschalk's participation in the first Gau Culture Week and demanding he be removed from the theater because of his "Jewish relations." Gottschalk is fired on January 8, 1938.

January 1938

After only a few days, Joachim Gottschalk signs a contract with Berlin's Volksbühne, where he soon becomes one of the most successful theater actors in Berlin.

May 1938

Goebbels establishes the Commission for Distribution of Confiscated Degenerate Art. The confiscated artworks are either stored in depots, sold to interested parties abroad, put up for auction or burned.

May 24, 1938

The Degenerate Music exhibition opens in Düsseldorf. It presents the work of composers and musicians whom the Nazis have defamed since 1933. It reflects the same concept as the "Degenerate Art" exhibit in condemning modern music, including works by Hanns Eisler, Paul Hindemith and Arnold Schoenberg, as well as certain musical genres, such as jazz and swing.

September 1, 1938

Joachim Gottschalk's contract as an employee with the Volksbühne in Berlin begins. Since spring 1937, he has been appeared at this theater as guest actor.

November 7, 1938

Premiere at the Berliner Capitol cinema of Joachim Gottschalk's film debut, Du und ich (dir. Wolfgang Liebeneiner), in which he plays the male lead opposite Brigitte Horney.

MARRIAGE IN THE SHADOWS

November 9-10, 1938

So-called Night of Broken Glass (Kirstallnacht): Nazi organized anti-Semitic pogroms throughout Germany

November 9-10, 1938

Joachim Gottschalk is on location in Libya for his next film, Aufruhr in Damaskus (dir. Gustav Ucicky). Meta Gottschalk and her 6-year-old son are at the family apartment in Berlin-Grunewald during the anti-Semitic riots.

March 8, 1939

Premiere of Aufruhr in Damaskus at the Berlin Capitol cinema. Two days later, Gottschalk begins working on his third film, Flucht ins Dunkel (dir. Arthur Maria Rabenalt).

Spring 1939

The director of the Volksbühne theater in Berlin succeeds in getting Joachim Gottschalk a full membership in the Reich Cultural Chamber.

September 1, 1939

The Second World War breaks out when Germany invades Poland.

December 16, 1939

Premiere of Eine Frau wie du (dir. Victor Tourjansky) in Berlin. The audience celebrates Joachim Gottschalk as the "German Clark Gable."

April 1940

Joachim Gottschalk goes to Vienna to shoot the film Ein Leben lang (dir. Gustav Ucicky), performing opposite Paula Wessely.

Summer 1940

The Gottschalk family spends their vacation on the island of Hiddensee. Here, Joachim also works on his film Das Mädchen von Famö (dir. Hans Schweikart), with Brigitte Horney and Gustav Knuth. When the shooting moves to Munich, Meta and her son return to Berlin.

1940-41

Joachim Gottschalk starts working on yet another film, Die schwedische Nachtigall (dir. Peter Paul Brauer), and performs at the Volksbühne in Berlin. Veit Harlan plans to cast him in his film Die goldene Stadt. When Goebbels hears this, however, he is outraged that a major German movie star is still married to a Jewish woman without facing any consequences. Goebbels presses Joachim to divorce Meta, which he refuses to do. In May 1941, Goebbels orders that he be professionally blacklisted because of his "mixed" marriage. From this point on, film and theater directors are reluctant to cast Gottschalk; instead, he works in radio and gets an offer for a television program.

September 11, 1941

The Jewish Cultural Association is dissolved.

MARRIAGE IN THE SHADOWS

November 6, 1941

Rehearsals for the comedy Das Prinzip are underway at the Theater an der Saarlandstrasse in Berlin, when Joachim and Meta Gottschalk commit suicide with their son. The story and obituaries are strictly suppressed by the Ministry of Propaganda. No further mention is made of them as long as the Nazis are in power. Although it is not allowed for a Jew and non-Jewish German and to share a grave, family friends make sure that the family is buried together at the Southwest Stahnsdorf cemetery in Berlin. Many of Gottschalk's fans only learn of his death after the war.

Compiled by Hiltrud Schulz, DEFA Film Library at UMass Amherst

Sources

www.anna-seghers.de

www.berlin.de/ba-charlottenburg-wilmersdorf/ba/001106.html

www.berliner-zeitung.de/archiv/fuer-den-schauspieler-joachim-gottschalk-wird-heute-eine-gedenktafel-enthuehlt-von-den-nazis-in-den-tod-getrieben,10810590,9849366.html

www.dhm.de

en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Joachim_Gottschalk

www.friedrichwolf.de

www.hans-schweikart.de

www.juedischekulturbund.com

www.maerkischeallgemeine.de/cms/beitrag/10830462/2706882/

www.moma.org

www.usc.edu/libraries/archives/arc/libraries/feuchtwanger/aboutfeuchtwanger.html

Bock, Hans-Michael, and Michael Tötenberg, eds. *Das Ufa-Buch – Kunst und Krisen, Stars und Regisseure, Wirtschaft und Politik*. Frankfurt am Main: Zweitausendeins, 1992.

Hake, Sabine. *German National Cinema*. London, New York: Routledge, 2002.

Henning, Klaus J.. "...oder man geht zugrunde." *Die Zeit* 1 April, 2004.

Liebe, Ulrich. *Verehrt, verfolgt, vergessen: Schauspieler als Naziopfer*. Berlin, Weinheim: Beltz Quadriga, 1992.

Rovit, Rebecca. *The Jewish Kulturbund Theatre Company in Nazi Berlin*. Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2012.