

## BERLIN ALEXANDERPLATZ: THE STORY OF FRANZ BIBERKOPF/ BERLIN-ALEXANDERPLATZ: DIE GESCHICHTE FRANZ BIBERKOPFS (1931)

### LOCATION

*Justizvollzugsanstalt Tegel, Seidelstrasse 39, 13507 Berlin*



**WORKING-CLASS BERLINER** Franz Biberkopf is determined to lead an honest life following his release from Tegel Prison. He represents society's 'everyman' who seeks not so much to rise above his station as to live his life on the 'straight and narrow'. Yet Biberkopf's determination is met with challenges and setbacks. Reinhold Hoffmann, leader of a small-time criminal gang, attempts to entice him into a criminal life. As a result, Biberkopf loses an arm, becomes entangled in criminal charges, but ultimately is found innocent. Reminiscent of a morality play, the film relays the theme of struggle to achieve happiness through a simple and honest lifestyle. A fortress-like image of Tegel Prison opens the film presenting a sweeping panorama of the complex. The physicality of the impenetrable brick fortification morphs into a waffle-like brick wall. The bleak prison facade denotes the austere life inside the complex. The foreboding imagery projects an isolated and solitary image of the penal institution, juxtaposed with the thriving shrub Biberkopf gently caresses as he leaves prison. This contrast, to the vibrancy of city life beyond the prison walls, is reinforced with the moving streetcar and everyday chatter of people aboard it. *Berlin Alexanderplatz* provides commentary on the social stratification and impotence of institutions in Weimar-era Berlin. Prison is a place of punishment, not rehabilitation. Yet, despite social upheaval, struggle and the fact that one finds criminals outside as well as inside its walls, the good among the working class still prove able to live an honest and decent life.

••Carson Phillips

*Directed by Piel Jutzi*

*Brief scene description: Franz Biberkopf is released and re-enters society*

*Timecode for scene: 0:00:25 – 0:02:17*



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