

## *Zionist Film Propaganda in Nazi Germany*

JAN-CHRISTOPHER HORAK, *Westfaelische Wilhelms-Universitaet, Muenster*

In the last few years our knowledge of film propaganda in relation to international politics in the 1930s has increased greatly. Yet aside from Taylor Downing's little known paper, 'Palestine on Film', and a few long forgotten articles, little has been published on Zionist film propaganda, produced before the founding of the State of Israel. In fact, various organisations connected with the World Zionist Organization managed at the time to produce and distribute numerous propaganda films at the international level. The World Zionist Organization set itself the two-fold task of convincing world Jewry of Zionist goals and of influencing Anglo-American foreign policy in regards to Palestine. Surprisingly, a central piont for Zionist film activity was Berlin. **Even while German Jews were forcibly removed from the nazified film industry, the German Propaganda Ministry allowed the Zionist Union of Germany to organise segregated production and distribution outlets in the Reich: Zionist film propaganda in Germany was to encourage the Jewish community to emigrate to Palestine. Meanwhile, German-speaking immigrants in Palestine were often responsible for Zionist film production.**

In the 1920s the Jewish Agency evolved into a state within a state in Palestine, as a result of both the Balfour Declaration of 2 November 1917, in which the British Government recognised, in principle, the need for a Jewish homeland, and the League of Nations resolution of 16 September 1922, creating the British Mandate in Palestine. Through the Jewish Agency, officially recognised in Article 4 of the League's resolution, the World Zionist Organization created a political, social and economic infrastructure for Jewish citizens in Palestine, simultaneously representing their interests in London. Funding for the Jewish Agency was handled through the Palestine Foundation Fund Ltd (*Keren Hayesod*) while the Jewish National Fund (*Keren Kayemeth L'Israel*) was responsible for the acquisition and colonisation of land. In contrast, Moslem and Christian Palestinians failed to create comparable institutions, although both the Balfour Declaration and the League's resolution certified Arab rights. The idea of a national Palestinian entity had not coalesced.

After the revolts of the non-Jewish population in May 1921, August 1929 and throughout 1936–1939 (in part a reaction to increased Jewish presence), the British Government recognised the necessity of finding a just political solution for Jewish and Christian minorities, as well as the Moslem majority. A series of commissions proposed various partition plans, yet the Foreign Office remained intransigent, at the same time curtailing Jewish immigration. Then came the White Paper of 1939 announcing the immediate cessation of Jewish immigration and the creation of a Palestine State. This policy, however, ignored the changed political realities. Jewish emigration to Palestine was no longer primarily motivated by Zionism, but now included simple survival for European Jewry. Fascist terror against German Jewish

citizens was a well publicised fact, yet few countries were willing to open their doors to Jewish refugees.

As a result of this increasingly precarious climate, Zionist propaganda sought to communicate the need for a Jewish homeland in Palestine, called *Erez Israel*, and support a campaign to finance large scale Jewish immigration. The demand for a centrally organised propaganda office within the World Zionist Organization thus gained support: "It has never been more important and urgent for Zionists to pursue internal and external ideological propaganda" [1]. Zionist film propaganda addressed itself to three different audiences: (1) Jewish communities in the USA and Western Europe, which were best able to finance Zionist construction, e.g. by buying the Shekel, the World Zionist Organization membership card (less than 4% of American Jews purchased the Shekel); (2) a non-Jewish public in Britain and America, which could possibly influence public opinion relative to government policy towards Palestine; (3) The disfranchised Jewish citizens of the Third Reich, who needed to be convinced of emigration opportunities in Palestine.

The birth of Zionist film production in Palestine is usually marked by Ya'akov Ben Dov's short newsreel of the British march into Jerusalem in 1917 [2]. By the mid-1920s films about Palestine were no longer a rarity, but early Zionist productions usually consisted of amateur travelogues, which were exhibited in Zionist clubs of Europe and America [3]. While the budding film industry's structure was capitalist, it relied heavily on subsidies from the Palestine Foundation Fund, the Jewish National Fund, and the *Histadrut* (General Federation of Labour). This trend, supported by theoretical discussions in Zionist literature, indicated a usage of film, as a propaganda medium, at a time when similar ideological efforts were beginning in other European countries [4].

The first professional Zionist film production outfit was founded in 1927 when Nathan Akselrod, a Russian émigré with film experience, began releasing a periodic newsreel, *Moledet*. Financed by the Jewish National Fund, this newsreel was made available to exhibitors for a nominal fee [5].

In 1935 Akselrod purchased a Tobis-Klangfilm mobile unit, allowing him to produce a soundfilm newsreel in English and Hebrew, *Carmel Weekly*. Despite funding from the Palestine Foundation Fund and Jewish National Fund, Akselrod's film production and laboratory operations were run on a shoestring [6].

Interoffice memos suggest that the national funds were not always happy with the resulting technical and formal inadequacy of Akselrod's work [7]. In other quarters, Zionist film production was criticised for depicting merely the topographical features of Palestine. One critic suggested fictional topics, dealing with everyday conflicts: "the first carefully attempted associations between Jews and Arabs, private friendships, that develop and tragically end: we want them and they want us, but politics . . .". The Zionist funds argued that the prohibitive cost of fiction features, and inadequate amortisation possibilities, made it more feasible to produce propaganda shorts [8].

In the mid-thirties, however, an escalation in and professionalisation of Zionist film propaganda took place in Palestine. This development was primarily influenced by German émigrés who had previously worked in the Weimar film industry, and now founded new film companies in Palestine. These filmmakers including Erich Brock, Alfred Dunkel, Timm Gidal, Benzion Fett, Helmar Lerski, Walter Kristaller, Juda Leman, Shabtai Petruschka, and the Sonnenfeld Brothers, worked together with Leo Herrmann and other German Zionists controlling World Zionist Organization filmmaking policy. An expanded Zionist production and distribution network

subsequently spread from Jerusalem to New York, Prague, Budapest and Berlin. As one journalist noted as early as 1934: "How is one to differentiate between projected and produced Palestine films? Press releases on such productions are nineteen to the dozen" [9]. Distribution patterns reflected various political factions within the World Zionist Organization, from Marxist-oriented *Hashomer Haizor* on the left, to extreme nationalist Revisionists on the right. On the whole, Zionist film distribution was characterised by (1) the minimal financial means available to Zionist organisations in individual countries; (2) the politics of these organisations and (3) the political content and aesthetics of the Zionist films in question.

Ideological diversity was exemplified by three independent productions from the early 1930s. *Dream of My People* (1933, Palestine-American Film Co., dir. A. J. Bloome) was a travelogue, featuring the American Cantor, Jossele Rosenblatt. Although exhibited in America, the film was banned in Palestine by the British censors, because of its negative depiction of Arabs and Jews [10]. Keenly aware of continuous religious tensions, the Palestine Censorship Office disallowed any visual presentation of violence and thus banned *Chaluzim* (1934, Sabra-Film-Production, dir. Alexander Ford) which had been produced in Warsaw and Palestine with members of the Habima Theater. Its plot revolved around a group of Polish *chaluzim* (pioneers) searching for water and their conflict with an evil sheik with an Arab-Jewish love affair for added interest. By portraying the feudal sheik as an oppressor of both Palestinians and Jews, the film allowed for a reconciliation between the two peoples, after the well was successfully dug. *Chaluzim's* proclamation of co-existence and socialist forms of communal organisation ideologically marked the film as an expression of left-wing Zionism [11]. Finally, the first Hebrew language film, *This is the Land* (1935, Aga Productions, dir. Baruch Agadah) combined newsreel and fictional footage. While the *Palestine Post* described the film as "a step in the right direction", Palestine Foundation Fund memos characterised it as a botched piece of work, worthy of being thrown into the sea [12]. Not surprisingly, then, Zionist officials began to take direct control of their film propaganda.

*Land of Promise* (1935, Urim Palestine Film Co., dir. Juda Leman), produced by Leo Herrmann and the Palestine Foundation Fund (in cooperation with Fox Film Corp. and a private financier), opened in Berlin in May 1935, before beginning a propagandistically and commercially successful international release. Unlike *Chaluzim*, the official Palestine Foundation Fund film tread firmly on centerist ideological ground. While professionally documenting Jewish Palestine's economic boom, the film down played the socialist aspects of the Kibbutz movement, and amply demonstrated opportunities for industrial private enterprise. At the same time, *Land of Promise* implied that Palestine's underdevelopment was due to Palestinian primitiveness, rather than centuries of feudal exploitation. Shots of Arab life (and oriental Jews) were underlined by the comment, . . . "When the Jews were driven out, the land gradually declined. Primitive life returned". While the verbal statement was in itself erroneous, given the decline of culture throughout the Judo-Christian-Moslem world during the Dark Ages, the juxtaposition of image and sound defined Palestine's economic under-development (whether unwittingly or unwillingly) in terms of national character traits. Palestine's leap into the twentieth century was thus linked to a technological and financial accomplishments of European Jewry [13].

In point of fact, Palestine's rapidly expanding economy was directly the result of the influx of Jewish capital, much of it coming from Germany through the *Ha'avara-Transfer-Agreement* between the German Reich and the Jewish Agency

(1933). The Agreement legalised the transference of capital, in the form of German goods. Although the deal caused serious public debate in the Zionist movement, leading to an ironic situation where Jews in America were boycotting German goods, while Palestine was being flooded with them, the World Zionist Organization's decision to collaborate with the Nazis was a *realpolitik* necessity, given the dire straits of German Jewry, and the concomitant need for Jewish capital in Palestine [14]. By December 1935 the Ha'avara Agreement had generated approximately six million pounds sterling; an influx capital which influenced sectors of the Jewish Palestinian economy, including the film industry [15].

The number of Jewish cinemas in Palestine doubled between 1927 and 1938, many of them founded by German émigré film distributors, like Benzion Fett, and Fritz and Otto Sonnenfeld, who had managed to transfer both capital and film prints to their new homeland [16]. German-Jewish capital was also invested in Zionist film production. Benzion Fett produced a documentary record, *The 19th Zionist Congress* (1935, Lucerne), which was commercially exhibited in Fett's *Migdalor Cinema* in Tel Aviv [17]. Paul Boroschek, a former Berlin Banker, invested in the documentary, *Avodah* (Palestine Pictures Ltd., 1935, dir. Helmar Lerski). This film, unfortunately lost, was possibly the most sophisticated Zionist propaganda film of the 1930s.

Helmar Lerski, a well-known Swiss photographer with extensive experience as a cameraman and 'Schuefftan' specialist in the Imperial and Weimar film industries, began production on *Avodah* in 1934, possibly at the suggestion of Dr Ernst Aaron Mechner, head of the Berlin public relations office of the Jewish National Fund [18]. The film was financed privately and released commercially in Palestine, garnering excellent reviews in the Zionist press, but failing miserably at the box office [19]. After a private screening (attended by an enthusiastic John Grierson) in the house of British Zionist leader, Harry Sacher, Boroschek attempted unsuccessfully to find a distributor in Britain. After being screened at the *Biennale* in Venice (1935), *Avodah* received limited distribution in Europe through Sonnenfeld's Slavia-Films.

Efforts to distribute the film through the Palestine Foundation Fund also failed, although Boroschek's belief that the Fund was blocking exhibition (favouring its own *Land of Promise*) were unfounded: Fund correspondence over a three and one-half year period demonstrates moral support, despite private reservations regarding the film's 'bolshhevistic tendencies'. Its aestheticism also made it less appropriate for mass propaganda. Leo Herrmann agreed to distribute *Avodah* in Germany, but Boroschek lacked the financial means to supply prints, or even purchase his negative, which was held as collateral by the Hungarian lab responsible for post-production [20].

These circumstances were unfortunate considering *Avodah's* accepted aesthetic quality. Reviews and detailed correspondence describe the film as a visual poem, depicting hard physical labour in the Soviet montage style:

Work . . . That is the whole film's content, its images often intensifying to highest dynamism. Man and machine are its theme. The machine's stroke, the wheel's drive, the piston's hammering, the drill's clanking. Not since *Potemkin* have we seen such rhythm [21].

Consistent with his intensely lighted, close-up photo portraiture, Lerski constructed whole sequences out of close-ups, which culminate, like *Chaluzim*, in a successful search for water. This probably made *Avodah* less suitable for propaganda purposes, as one critic noted: "Here the love of details and cut-outs is driven to such an

extreme that the connexion to a living Palestine dissolves, and its effectiveness as a Palestine film for Jews in the diaspora is negligible" [22]. Opening with a long sequence showing Arab workers, the film ended with the *chaluẓim* singing the leftist *Hashomer Hazair*'s anthem, leading at least one Zionist official to characterise the film's depiction of Palestine as "a glorification of the dictatorship of the working class", rather than in the image of 'a Jewish land of future' [23].

The evidence so far suggests that the dominant ideology within Zionism directed its film propaganda towards the Jewish middle-class, who were most likely to finance Zionist objectives in Palestine. In this connexion, the *Ha'avara Agreement* also created a *raison d'être* for Zionist film production and distribution in the Third Reich.

Up until the formulation of the so-called Final Solution at Berlin-Wannsee in January 1942, Nazi policy against the Jewish community was based on segregation and expulsion. German Jewry was systematically evicted from all public, social, and economic spheres, and simultaneously relegated to self-administrated Jewish institutions, such as the Jewish Culture League (*Juedische Kulturbund*) and the Zionist Union of Germany (*Zionistische Verein fuer Deutschland*). The Nazis thus supposedly certified "their loyalty towards Jewish cultural needs", as Hans Hinkel, the Propaganda Ministry's bureaucrat for Jewish affairs, cynically noted [24]. In reality, though, the Nazis only temporarily tolerated these financially self-sufficient institutions, while at the same time economically and propagandistically exploiting them.

After 1933 the Zionist Union of Germany played a central role in the life of the isolated German Jewish community. Prior to Hitler's acquisition of power, the Union had represented only a small portion of German Jewry at least in contrast to the Central Association of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith (*Central Verein deutscher Staatsbürger juedischen Glaubens*), which represented the overwhelming majority of assimilated, liberal German Jewry [25]. The preference of the Nazis was clearly formulated:

The Government frankly supports the Zionist movement and gives it all possible privileges, because the Zionist policy of a planned Jewish emigration from Germany into Palestine coincides with the policy of the Nazi government . . . in the liquidation of the Jewish problem . . . [26].

The Zionists for their part, interpreted Hitler's Anti-Semitism as a blow against assimilation:

Hence, the Zionists could, for a time, at least, engage in a certain amount of non-criminal cooperation with the Nazi authorities; the Zionists too believed that "dissimilation," combined with the emigration to Palestine of Jewish youngsters and, they hoped, Jewish capitalists, could be "a mutually fair solution" [27].

The changed political constellations consequently effected attitudes in the Jewish community: In 1935–36 Zionist organisations collected three times as many contributions as in 1931–32. Gone were the times when a Jewish lawyer could uncritically remark that he would rather be hanged by Herr Hitler, than give one penny for Palestine [28]. Yet even after the Nurnberg laws made emigration the only feasible alternative, Zionist organisations still needed to convince a large portion of the Jewish community. Newcomers to Palestine were usually asked: "Have you come out of conviction or are you German?"

In this context it is not surprising that Zionists expanded their film propaganda activities in the Third Reich through the Palestine Film Office of the Zionist Union



(*Palestina Filmstelle der Zionistischen Vereinigung für Deutschland*). The Film Office's chief, Manfred Epstein, was apparently involved in Palestine Foundation Fund policy under Leo Herrmann as early as 1934. After organising the world premiere of *Land of Promise*, and distributing a number of short films, Epstein began negotiating for setting up film production facilities in Berlin. Working together with the former Ufa newsreel chief, George Engel, Epstein argued that German technical capabilities were superior to those available in Palestine. Between 1936–38 the Palestine Film Office in Berlin produced two feature films and five shorts [29].

All Zionist film productions were of course censored by the Nazi Propaganda Ministry, which permitted their screening "for members of the Jewish race only" [30]. The first films distributed by Palestine Film Office were 16mm silent documentaries, often produced by German-Jewish émigrés for Zionist contractors. The Tekufa Film Co. produced *From Vadi Charith to Emek Hefer* (1936, dir. Erich Brock, Walter Kristeller) for the Jewish National Fund; Timm Gidal shot *Erez Israel in Construction* (1936), and Ernst Meyer filmed *The Way to Reality* (1937) and *Brit Hanoar* (1937) for the *Keren Tora va'Avodah* [31]. These films dealt with Zionist colonisation and agriculture in the Kibbutzim, especially those settlements, which had been set up for German middle-class Jews. Furthermore, they were meant to counteract waning Zionist enthusiasm in the diaspora following the Arab revolts of 1936 [32]. The films were usually shown with live musical accompaniment, and preceded by a lecture.

On the more aesthetic side, Helmar Lerski and Walter Kristeller completed a short documentary musical, *Hebrew Melody* (Jewish Culture League of Berlin, 1935). The film shows the world famous violinist, Andreas Weissgerber, playing the title piece in front of Absalom's Pillar, and walking through Jerusalem's old city. Sound recording and post production was handled by Shabtai Petruschka in the Töbis Klangfilm studios, during Weissgerber's tour to Berlin in March 1935, with Joseph Rosenstock and the Jewish Culture League's orchestra [33]. As in *Avodah*, Lerski edited sequences into numerous close-ups of Weissgerber's hands, face and body. The film was apparently distributed by the Palestine Foundation Fund, but not widely seen [34].

In April 1937 the Palestine Film Office released its first feature production, *Hatikvah—A Document of Hope* (1937, dir. Georg Engel) with all profits going to the Jewish Winter Help. Compiled from newsreel footage, *Hatikvah* presented images from Palestine's pre-war and Mandate period, thus summarising the technological and economic successes of the Jewish community in Palestine (*Yishuv*). Visually the film leaves the impression that only the forces of nature hindered Jewish colonisation: stones are carried away, swamps are drained, hydroelectric plants constructed, and the land irrigated, while human beings, whether Jews or Arabs, appear only at the fringes. Still, *Hatikvah* was a success in non-Zionist circles [35].

In 1937–38 Epstein and Engel produced at least five more short films. *Shekel* (shown as an advertising short in Berlin before a Jewish Culture League theatre performance in June 1937), asked its viewers to support the annual World Zionist Organization membership drive. *Miterleben* advertised and documented the growth of the *Juedische Rundschau*, and was screened prior to the feature film, *The Golem* (1936, dir. Julien Duvivier). The other films, *Schaffende Wille* (*Jews become Farmers and Craftsmen*), *Ein Tag-Ein Werk*, and *Makkabi-Sport*, were probably compiled from Palestine Foundation Fund footage sent from Jerusalem to Berlin, for editing and post-production work [36].

*The New Way* (1938, dir. Georg Engel) was the Palestine Film Office's first sound

feature. Officially sponsored by the Jewish National Fund, this compilation film utilised newsreel material shot by Akselrod. In order to screen the film in Germany, the Film Office had to purchase both a production and an exhibition license from the Tobis Klangfilm Syndicate because the original material had been shot on a Tobis-Intercine system [37]. Similar to *Hatikvah*, *The New Way* depicted landscapes and production, leading one reviewer to comment, that real people disappear in the montage of streets and buildings [38]. Again the image of Palestine as a desert waiting to be colonised was reinforced.

A description of the film's premiere in Berlin on 20 September 1938, gives an idea of how these Zionist films were propagandistically employed. The evening began with Dr Josef Weiss, *The New Way's* scriptwriter, greeting an audience, consisting of representatives from the Jewish community, and pointing out that construction continues, "despite the unrest in *Erez Israel*". After a short musical presentation by the Jewish Culture League choir, Rabbi Max Nussbaum asked for contributions towards a new German-Jewish colony in Palestine, followed by the screening of the film.

As mentioned, the Palestine Film Office not only produced Zionist films, but also distributed and exhibited them throughout the Third Reich. *Hatikvah*, for example, was screened in the Jewish communities of Berlin, Dresden, Duisberg, Chemnitz, Gera, Göppingen, Erfurt, Halberstadt, Hamburg, Duesseldorf, Koenigsberg, Liegnitz, Stettin and Stuttgart. The Office also distributed non-Zionist films, such as *The Golem*, and the Yiddish feature, *Y'dl mit n' F'dl* (Green-Film, 1936, dir. Joseph Green). The latter film relates the adventures of a group of Yiddish street musicians in the Shtetl and Warsaw, who eventually emigrate to America. Ironically the Nazi government began mass deportation of German-Polish Jews to Poland a few short months after the film was screened.

In order to legally distribute *Y'dl* in the Reich, the Palestine Film Office paid Tobis 3500 RM for a production license (which Green-Film, Warsaw, had failed to secure), an export license (1000 RM), and an exhibition license (7½% of the box office), totalling over 5000 RM, without including the Office's own overhead. Since box office receipts amounted to no more than 7000 RM throughout the Reich, it is clear that only Tobis-Klangfilm made a profit, through their ruthless licensing policy [39].

The Zionist Union and the Jewish Culture League were permitted to cultivate Jewish arts—the presentation of German 'Aryan' works was forbidden—but only if the Jewish community footed the bill. Furthermore, Nazi officials monetarily exploited these limited privileges. All the while, Nazi propaganda maintained that National Socialism supported Jewish cultural life—separate but equal, so to speak. Their true aims were soon apparent.

Two months after the premiere of *The New Way*, the Nazis staged the so-called *Reichs-Kristallnacht*, supposedly an eruption of German *Volks* wrath, but in reality the second phase of a new, planned, policy of genocide against German and European Jewry. The Jewish Culture League continued to function until 1941, but the Jewish press, including the *Juedische Rundschau* was banned. Zionist film propaganda activities also apparently ceased after November 1938; Manfred Epstein emigrated to Palestine, Georg Engel to America. Nearly 50% of their German Jewish audience was murdered in the death-camps of Auschwitz.

Zionist film propaganda in Palestine continued on a limited scale after 1938: At the instigation of Golda Meir and Aaron Remez, Helmar Lerski organised a 16mm film workshop in Tel Aviv for the *Histadrut* (General Federation of Labour) and

recruited a group of younger German-Jewish émigrés, including Naftali Rubenstein (a former Bauhaus student), Robert Sziller, and Rolf Kneller. They produced at least four documentaries, before the war put an end to *Histadrut* film propaganda activities [40].

During the War, Zionist propaganda was limited to books, pamphlets and newspapers with the emphasis placed on Jewish contributions to the British war effort. Between 1945–1948 reemergent Zionist film propaganda expanded in support of the international battle for a Jewish state in Palestine. Leo Hermann produced *Balaam's Story* (*Keren Hayesod*, 1946, dir. Helmar Lerski) and Helmar Lerski directed *Tomorrow is a Wonderful Day* (*Hadassah*, 1948) while post-war immigrants Josef Leytes, Norman Lurie, Herb Kline, and Joseph Krungold were to make major film contributions. This post-war period, however, is an important subject for further research [41].

Zionist film propaganda in the 1930s was significantly affected by the rise of the Nazi state and the enforced emigration of German Jewry. Zionist film production was dominated by German-Jewish Zionists in Palestine and Berlin, working at times in uneasy cooperation with the Nazi Propaganda Ministry. On the whole, Zionist film propaganda advanced and legitimised Zionist objectives in Palestine, especially in connexion with the transfer of German-Jewish capital to Palestine, technological development, and German immigration. Given the conflicting historical circumstances, it is understandable, if not excusable, that Zionist film propaganda, excepting Leftist examples, ignored the interests of non-Jewish Palestinians.

*Correspondence:* Jan-Christopher Horak, Sophienstr. 16, D-4400 Muenster, Federal Republic of Germany.

## NOTES

- [1] "Fuereine Propaganda-Abteilung", *Juedische Rundschau*, 11 August 1936, No. 64, p. 4. Source material on Zionist film propaganda was compiled as follows: (1) Film identification and filmographic information was found in film reviews appearing in the Zionist press, e.g. *Juedische Rundschau* (Berlin) *Selbstwehr* (Prague), and *Palestine Post* (Jerusalem), German censorship records, and existing film prints. (2) Production information, biographical data, etc. was culled from published sources, interviews, and surviving correspondence, located in the Bundesarchiv, Koblenz (R 109 1/28a), and the Central Zionist Archives, Jerusalem (KH (Palestine Foundation Fund) 4B, Box 378 and 1202).
- [2] HARRIS, E. (1948) "Filmproduction Problems and Activities in Palestine", *Penguin Film Review*, 5, pp. 36–41; FREEDEN, HERBERT (1948) "Film Production in Palestine", *Sight and Sound*, 17, No. 67, pp. 117–119 (117).
- [3] Neus-Film, Berlin, announced a 'Palestine-Film' as early as 12 May 1920 (*Film-Kurier*, 2, No. 99). The Jewish National Fund distributed *Das alte und das neue Palaestina* (Palestine, Old and New) in 1924, according to censorship records (B. 9383), dated Berlin 24 November 1924. See also *Jahrbuch der Filmindustrie 1923/1925*, p. 391 (Berlin, Verlag Lichtbildbuehne); (12 September 1925) *Lichtbildbuehne*, 18, No. 177; (26 September 1925) *Lichtbildbuehne*, 18, No. 189.
- [4] See BERGER, JULIUS (1925) *Die Propaganda für den Keren Kayemeth* (Jerusalem, *Keren Kayemeth L'Israel*), p. 34.
- [5] Nathan Akselrod (b. 1905 Mohilev Province, Ukraine) worked as an optical lens grinder and camera builder, before attempting his hand as film production: he made Ukranian titles for Soviet films, then adapted a Gogol story (1925), before going to Palestine in 1926. Interview Tel Aviv, 7 March 1983. See also Jewish National Fund (KKL) (1939) *Report to the Head Office for the Years 5698–5699 to the XXI Zionist Congress at Geneva*, p. 12 (Jerusalem).
- [6] Akselrod's laboratory/studio consisted of two wooden shacks, in which Akselrod mixed his own chemicals. Interview. See also GOTTGETREU, ERICH "Hollywood in der Huette", *Juedische Bibliothek*.



- 12 December 1935. An early effort to organize sound film production in Palestine, financed by the Oriental Film Co., Tel Aviv, apparently failed. Fritz Feld, the German-American actor, also participated. *Der Kinematograph*, 8 June 1933, 27, No. 108. Interview with Feld, Los Angeles, 17 June 1975.
- [7] Letter Gal Eser to Leo Herrmann, 26 October 1936 (KH 4B/1202).
  - [8] FRIEDENTHAL [FREEDEN], HERBERT, "Palaestina Film in der Sackgasse?", *Juedische Rundschau*, 19 June 1936, No. 49, p. 6; DUENNER, LAZAR, "Brief an die Redaktion", *Juedische Rundschau*, 3 July 1936, No. 53. Duenner was production head of the KKL film unit in Jerusalem.
  - [9] "Ein Palaestinafilm laeuft in Prag", *Juedische Rundschau*, 13 Aug. 1934, No. 70. Leo Herrmann was Secretary-General of the Keren Hayesod. An early Zionist short, *Das neue Palaestina* (Dr. Jack Levy, 1934, dir. Dr. Jodell) was censored in Berlin on 13 July 1934.
  - [10] *Juedische Rundschau*, 5 October 1934, No. 80; *New York Times*, 26 February 1934, p. 21. Print available at the American Film Institute, Washington DC.
  - [11] Print screened at Abraham F. Rad Archives, Jerusalem. Also available at AFI, Washington DC. See *New York Times*, 3 April 1934, p. 26; *Juedische Rundschau*, 31 August 1934, No. 70.
  - [12] *Palestine Post*, 26 February 1935, p. 4; Letter Ernst Aaron Mechner to Leo Herrmann, 4 April 1935 and 10 April 1935 (KH 4B/ 1202).
  - [13] Censored in Berlin (B.39269) on 13 May 1935. Print screened at Israel Film Archive, Jerusalem. See Leo Herrmann correspondence (KH 4B/ 1202); *Juedische Rundschau*, 17 May 1935, No. 40; 28 May 1935, No. 43; *Palestine Post* (30 October 1935); *New York Times* (21 November 1935), p. 27. Downing presents an excellent analysis of this film and other U.S. and British newsreels on Palestine. TAYLOR DOWNING (1979) *Palestine on Film* (London, Council for the Advancement of Arab-British Understanding).
  - [14] FEILCHENFELD, WERNER, DOLF MICHAELIS, LUDWIG PINNER (1972) *Ha'avara-Transfer nach Palaestina* (Tübingen); KISCH, F.H. "The German transfer and Jewish honour", *Palestine Post*, 11 October 1935.
  - [15] Gespraech mit D. GEORG LANDAUER, in: KREUZBERGER, MAX (Ed.) (1957) *Der Zionismus im Wandel Dreier Jahrzehnte* (Tel Aviv); LAQUEUR, WALTER (1972) *A History of Zionism* (London), pp. 508-510.
  - [16] Fritz Sonnenfeld (b. 29 January 1904 Brno, CSR) and Otto Sonnenfeld (b. 9 June 1898 Brno—d. 15 July 1966 Zurich) emigrated to Palestine in 1934 and 1938, respectively, with 'A' certificates (capitalist). In Prague Otto had owned Slavia-Films, which had produced *Extasy* (1933) and *Port Arthur* (1936); in Tel Aviv he founded Film Forum in 1945. Fritz founded the Shderoth Cinema (Tel Aviv) and a distribution company, Sunfilm. Interview with Fritz Sonnenfeld, Tel Aviv, 4 March 1983. For a list of cinemas in Palestine see KLINGER, RUTH (Ed.) (1946) *Art and Artists in Palestine* (Tel Aviv, Yavneh Pub); *Jahrbuch der Filmindustrie 1928* (Berlin, Verlag Lichtbildbuehne), p. 467; SHARAR, DEWAN "Film Prospects in Palestine", *Great Britain and the East*, 28 October 1937, No. 49, p. 601; BEAN KEITH "Palestine and Transjordan", *Sight and Sound*, July 1945, 14, No. 54, pp. 45-46.
  - [17] Bentzion Fett (b. 1886 Poland—d. ?) entered the German film industry as a distributor prior to W.W.I. In 1918 he co-founded the Bayerische Film Co. Fett and Wiesel, which produced nearly 20 films in the early 20's. Later Ben-Fett Film Co. produced a number of sound features and numerous shorts. Late in 1932 Fett was the subject of apparently antisemitic activity, when his name was removed from the credits of *Die elf schillischen Offiziere*, a film catering to nationalist circles. (18 October 1932) *Der Kinematograph*, No. 204. A print of *Zionist Congress* is available at the Rad Archives. See also *Palestine Post*, 18 October 1935, p. 10.
  - [18] ESKILDSEN, UTE & HORAK, JAN-CHRISTOPHER (1982) *Helmar Lerski—Lichtbildner/Lightdesigner*, pp. 6-29(16) (Essen, Museum Folkwang).
  - [19] *Avodah* cost approx. £3,000. Letter Gal Eser to Leo Herrmann, 22 March 1934; Letter Paul Boroschek to Dr. Arthur Hantke, 24 March 1935 (KH 4B/ 1202); See also FELD, HANS, "Palaestina in Prag", *Selbstwehr*, March 1935, p. 10; *Palestine Post*, 28 March 1935; *Juedische Rundschau*, 26 April 1935, No. 33/34; 7 June 1935; *Vienna Neue Freie Presse*; *Neue Zuericher Zeitung*, 22 September 1935, No. 1634; *Palestine Post*, 19 July 1935, p. 10. After its premiere on 13 July 1935, *Avodah* played for not more than a week in Tel Aviv and Haifa.
  - [20] For correspondence re. *Avodah* see (KH 4B/ 1202 and 378). Former Ufa sound technician Dr. Gerhard Goldbaum (d. 1945 Buchenwald) and composer Paul Dessau were responsible for post-production at the Hunia Studios, Budapest. Eskildsen/Horak, p. 132; Letter Manfred Epstein to Leo Herrmann, 30 April 1937; L. Herrmann to M. Epstein, 26 April 1938 (KH 4B/ 378).
  - [21] SCHWARZ, DR. KARL (13 August 1935) Lerskis Film Awodah, *Juedische Rundschau*, No. 65, p. 7.

- [22] ENGLAENDER, ARTHUR "Gedanken ueber den Palaestinafilm Awodah", *Selbstwehr*, 1 April 1936, 32, No. 13, p. 6.
- [23] Letter Arthur Hantke to Leo Herrmann, 27 March 1935 (KH 4B/ 1202).
- [24] "Die juedischen Kulturbuende", *Juedische Rundschau*, 14 May 1937, No. 38. Joseph Wulf once called Hinkel "the dictator of all banished Jewish artists and writers," while for Herbert Freedman he was an "advocatus diaboli." PLESSEN, ELISABETH, "Juedische Kunst im faschistischen, rassistischen, Deutschland", *Die Zeit*, 7 and 14 October 1977, No. 42, 43.
- [25] BERING, DIETZ (1982) "Geeinte Zweinatur. Zur Struktur politischer Perspektiven im Central-Verein deutscher Staatsbuenger juedischen Glaubens", in: KOEBNER, THOMAS (Ed.) (1982) *Weimars Ende* (Frankfurt/Main, Surkamp Verlag), pp. 182-204.
- [26] "Nazis adopt Zionism", *Palestine Post*, p. 5, 31 May 1935.
- [27] ARENDT, HANNAH (1963) *Eichmann in Jerusalem. A Report on the Banality of Evil* (New York, Viking Press), pp. 54-55.
- [28] ARENDT, p. 54; BEHRING, p. 183.
- [29] Memo E. M. Epstein, 27 March 1934; Letter M. Epstein to L. Herrmann, 16 April 1937 (KH 4B/ 378). Georg Engel (b. 5 December 1904 Berlin—d. Kansas City) worked as a cutter for Deulig Newsreels, and after 1927 as production head of all Ufa Newsreels. He was fired on 6 April 1933, less than a week after the Ufa decided to remove all Jewish employees. In 1936 he began working for the Palestine Film Office, renamed *Kol-Noa Institut fuer Juedische Filmarbeit* (im Reichsverband der juedischen Kulturbuende in Deutschland) in March 1938 (R 109 I/28a).
- [30] German censorship records were published weekly in the trade press, noting producer, distributor, country of origin, length, date, censorship number and injunctions, e.g. "Vorfuehrung nur in geschlossenen Veranstaltungen vor Angehoerigen der juedischen Rasse."
- [31] Erich Brock and Walter Kristaller (b. 1893 Berlin) had worked as cutter and cameraman in Berlin for the Ufa, before setting up Tekufa Films in Tel Aviv in 1936. Although an attempt to compete with Akselrod's newsreels lacked support from the Zionist Funds, Tekufa did produce films for Palestine Foundation Fund (KH) and Jewish National Fund (KKL). Letter Erich Brock to Mr. Bistrizki (KKL), 20 October 1936 (KH 4B/ 1202); *Juedische Rundschau*, 4 June 1936, No. 44, No. 47 12 June 1936, No. 83 16 October 1936. Censorship records for the two *Keren Tora* films (B.45818) and (B.45819) are dated 26/27 July 1937. Another short advert, *Sport Werbefilm*, sponsored by the Society of W.W.I. Jewish Veterans, was censored 1 October 1937.
- [32] KKL (1937) *Report of the Head Office for the Years 5696-5697 to the XXth Zionist Congress at Zurich*, pp. 11.15 (Jerusalem). The report notes: "The prolonged and violent disturbances of 1936 shook the Zionist faith of not a few people in the Diaspora and signs of a decline in enthusiasm for *Erez Israel* became apparent. . . . Short films were prepared on Emek Hefer, the disturbances of 1936, and Upper Galilee." For a description of German middle class settlements at Emek Hefer, see KKL (1934) *Der Erloeser des Bodens von Erez Israel* (Jerusalem), pp. 22-28.
- [33] Print screened at Israel Film Archive, Jerusalem. Shabtei Petruschka (b. 15 March 1904 Leipzig) also orchestrated incidental music for Zionist film screenings in Berlin, before emigrating to Palestine in 1938, where he became musical director of the Voice of Israel. Interview with Petruschka, Jerusalem, 9 March 1983.
- [34] Letter Dr. Max Praeger to Leo Herrmann, 3 March 1936 (KH 4B/ 1202).
- [35] Print available at National Center for Jewish Film, Waltham MA. See also *Juedische Rundschau*, 16 April 1937, No. 30; Letters M. Epstein to L. Herrmann, 16 and 30 April 1937 (KH 4B/ 1202); Censorship record dated 5 February 1938 (B.47535).
- [36] Letter L. Herrmann to M. Epstein, 27 June 1937 (KH 4B/ 1202); *Juedische Rundschau*, 4 June 1937, No. 44, 12 October 1937, Nr. 81; Censorship records dated: 1 October 1937 (B.46340), 22 January 1938 (B.47355), 4 February 1938 (B.47531), 22 February 1938 (B.47456).
- [37] Letters M. Epstein to Herr Schallada (Tobis AG), 20 April 1938, 28 April 1938, 18 August 1938 (R 109 I/28a). Censorship records are dated 4 May 1938 (B.48181).
- [38] *Juedische Rundschau*, 20 September 1938, No. 75. A complete nitrate print exists at the Staatliches Filmarchiv der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Berlin (GDR).
- [39] Letters Dr. Kurt Maschke to Tobis AG, 2 April 1938; M. Epstein to Herr Schallada (Tobis AG), 11 April 1938, 20 April, 16 May, 18 May, 1 June, 15 June, 1 July, 28 July, 28 September 1938 (R 109 I/28a). *J'dl* was censored 11 April 1938 (B. 48087); print available at National Center for Jewish Film.
- [40] Interview Rolf Kneller, Jerusalem, 8 March 1983; Eskildsen/Horak, p. 132.
- [41] Eskildsen/Horak, p. 28-29. I would like to thank Dr. Mikael Heymann (Central Zionist Archives) for making important documents available to me.