



Palestine 1914-1919 from the Steven Spielberg Jewish Film Archive
Wendy Luterman, Senior Librarian

Introduction

The films can be classified into three categories: Films directly pertaining to the War, films from this period describing settlement and development in Palestine and films produced later about this period. These include both documentaries and dramatizations.

Historical background

The position of the 85,000 Jews living in Ottoman Palestine was extremely precarious and there were severe food shortages.

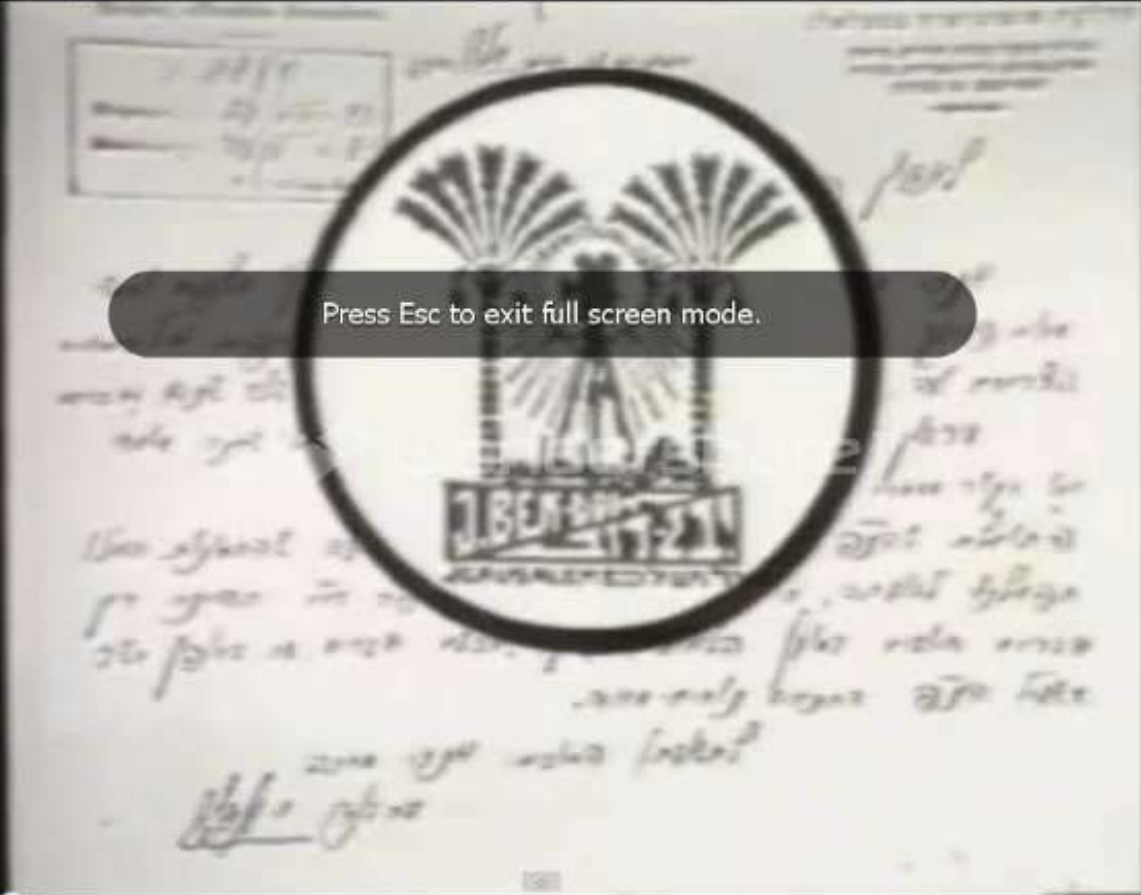
Turkish labor battalions

Zion mule corps unit and later Jewish Legion

NILI

Yaakov Ben Dov

One of the primary film makers documenting General Allenby's historic entry into Jerusalem as portrayed in his First Film *Judea Liberated* in 1917.



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He has also immortalized images of the Jewish Legion in Palestine in his second film *Land of Israel Liberated* (1919) including a portrait of Zeev Jabotinsky in uniform.

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Australian military cameraman Frank Hurley filmed images of the Australian Air Force and the Australian cavalry. Includes rare footage of the battle for Beer Sheva. Copyright is held by the Australian War Memorial in Canberra.

Frederic Rossif collected historical footage for his 1968 film *Wall in Jerusalem*.

Film of British army fortifications, Indian troops entering Haifa and British troops in Zichron Yaakov in 1918 engaging Turkish troops, Turkish POWs guarded by Indian soldiers, Australian and New Zealand soldiers, etc . He also has both Ben Dov and IWM footage of Allenby's entry.

There are also images of British and Indian troops in Jerusalem in 1917 in the 1925 tinted film *From Cairo To Jerusalem* (not Archive copyright) (silent, French subtitles) and in *Jerusalem: historical impressions, 1900-1918* (not Archive copyright) (sound, English). This film also has footage of Allenby entering Jerusalem, of Emir Feisal welcoming T.E. Lawrence and ends with Chaim Weizmann welcoming a British committee on Palestine.

Raw film stock extremely hard to acquire. Therefore few films produced during this period.

Judea Liberated (in addition to the Allenby footage): Hanukkah festivities in Jerusalem schools, craftsmen working in workshops, public gatherings, etc. under the title “*Mirror of the Return to Zion*”

Land of Israel Liberated: Jewish settlement in north of the country including Merchavia, Sedgera, Kibbutz Degania, Rosh Pina, Safed, Migdal and Metulla.



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In addition to the war material mentioned above in the film *From Cairo To Jerusalem*, there are shots of sites of Christian interest in Jerusalem, such as the Augusta Victoria building, stations in the Via Dolorosa and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Since the war footage is authentic, it is not clear whether these scenes were filmed during the same period or in 1925.

Out Of The Darkness (1946) , the scenes of Hadassah nurses rushing to Palestine during WWI and working from the old Rothschild Hospital are known to be authentic.

The 1963 biographical film *The Vision of Chaim Weizmann* contains stills of World War I . Includes a photograph of Jewish soldiers in the Austrian Army praying at the Western Wall.



The 1941 Australian feature film *Forty Thousand Horsemen* preserved by the Australian National Film and Sound Archive , dramatizes the exploits of the Australian Light Horse cavalry in Palestine during WWI.

Copy of the Center for the Heritage of Intelligence's film on the NILI underground organization.

Baruch Agadati (1895-1976), an artist, dancer and filmmaker who bought out Ben Dov's collection.

In 1934, he produced *Zot Hi Ha'aretz* the first Hebrew talkie produced in Eretz Yisrael. It describes the first fifty years of the Zionist enterprise as seen in a collage of newsreel and dramatic footage. The WWI sequences combine Ben Dov's scenes with dramatization.

1914

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In his last work *Tomorrow's Yesterday* (1964), Agadati uses a similar sequence with significant additions.

Scenes of Bnai Binyamina pioneers visiting Sarah Aaronsohn's grave, a clear reference to NILI in WWI which also coincides with the establishment's eventual acceptance of their role.

More detailed footage of the Jewish Legion and includes Allenby's entry into Jerusalem, reviewing the guard of honor and a still of him receiving the keys to the city which is omitted in *Zot Hi Haaretz*.

The 1963 biographical film on Chaim Weizmann also describes his contribution to the British War effort. He developed a bacterial fermentation process for producing acetone, essential in the production of gun powder. It has been speculated that the Balfour Declaration issued on 2 November 1917 was partly a token of gratitude to Weizmann who was also president of the British Zionist Federation. The declaration approves in principle the settlement of a national homeland for the Jews in Eretz Yisrael.



PERIOD 11111.

October 22, 1917.

Dear Lord Balfour,

I have much pleasure in conveying to you, on behalf of His Majesty's Government, the following declaration of sympathy with Jewish Zionist aspirations which has been submitted to, and approved by, the Cabinet.

Your Majesty's Government view with favour the establishment in Palestine of a national home for the Jewish people, and will use their best endeavours to facilitate the achievement of this object. It being clearly understood that nothing shall be done which may prejudice the civil and religious rights of existing non-Jewish communities in Palestine, or the rights and political status enjoyed by Jews in any other territory.

I should be grateful if you would bring this declaration to the attention of the Jewish Community.

Yours sincerely,
Arthur Balfour