

A DEAL

WITH

THE DEVIL?

DIRECTOR

AVIDA LIVNY

PRODUCERS

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ANIMATION DIRECTOR

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SCREENWRITER

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DOCUMENTARY FILM

2024 / 51 MINS / ISRAEL / HEBREW



PARTNERS

HOT - CHANNEL 8
THE CLAIMS CONFERENCE
PRIVATE INVESTORS

LOGLINE

"A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL?" TELLS THE INCREDIBLY UNLIKELY STORY OF THE MOST DRAMATIC AND CONTROVERSIAL AGREEMENT OF THE 20TH CENTURY: A DEAL MADE BETWEEN THE NAZIS AND JEWISH LEADERS IN PALESTINE TO SAVE GERMAN-JEWISH LIVES.

SCREENER LINK

[HTTPS://VIMEO.COM/998597928/60B09D0025](https://vimeo.com/998597928/60B09D0025)

SHORT SYNOPSIS

A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL? will unveil - for the first time onscreen - the signing of the Transfer Agreement, one of the most dramatic and controversial deals of the 20th century. The agreement, made between the Nazi party and Jewish leaders in Mandatory Palestine, permitted tens of thousands of German Jews to emigrate. Told from the perspective of Sam Cohen, initiator of the agreement, and his wife Anita, who vehemently opposed it, the film examines the struggle of principle versus pragmatism, forcing viewers to ask themselves, what would they do: condemn and boycott evil or make a deal with it to save lives?





LONG SYNOPSIS & STORYLINE

Hitler's election speech is heard in the background while we watch different shots of a 1933 train ride across Europe. Hitler's voiceover speech ends and Anita's begins. She is reading out a letter she had written to Sam. "Dear Sam... while you make your way to Palestine, the situation back here is getting worse and worse." She describes the general mood surrounding Hitler's rise to power, and what she and her friends went through as they sat in her and Sam's Luxembourg mansion, listening to the Fuhrer's speech on the radio. At this point we finally see the animated Sam standing at the Nazi consulate in Jerusalem, before switching to an image of the real Nazi flag waving in the Jerusalem air.

Sam enters the consulate. His voice is heard in voiceover, speaking about the German Consul Wolff, whose wife is Jewish and fears for their fate. Wolff hates Hitler and has a habit of making lewd jokes in front of the Fuhrer's portrait. Sam introduces himself to the consul and describes the deal he had come up with: the Germans want the Jews out but want to keep their property. The Jews want out too but don't want to lose their property. Meanwhile, an international boycott is brewing against the Nazis, set to leave Germany destitute.

So, what can be done? Every Jew who leaves Germany for Palestine will be required to deposit a portion of their savings into an account, of which an average of two-thirds would be returned to them once they arrive in Palestine - but only in the equivalent of exported German goods.

Wolff likes the idea and promises to introduce Sam to the right people in the Nazi regime. The project is launched.

MARCH 1933. An American cinematic journal details the global community's struggle against Germany: the US is pushing for an economical boycott.

The animated Sam is sitting in a Berlin café, writing in his journal about his meeting with Hans Hartenstein – the man in charge of foreign currency under the Third Reich. Using documentary materials, we learn that the pair have known each other since WWI. Hartenstein favors Sam's plan and even tells him that Hitler himself mentioned the importance of Jewish immigration to Palestine in one of his speeches.

Anita writes to Sam about her plans of initiating a global boycott of Nazi Germany and its collaborators. Supported by documentary footage, Anita describes how ashamed she is of those cooperating with the Nazis – especially in the Land of Israel. She had heard rumors that the Zionist leadership – including men such as Ben Gurion and Arlozorov – are looking to profit from this ordeal, which enrages her. Sam realizes his plan will make him many enemies, including both his wife and the entire Zionist movement's command.



APRIL 1ST, 1933. A collection of German and American newsreels allows us to glimpse the first day of the boycott: Nazi officers are seen raiding Jewish-owned businesses, sabotaging their merchandise and equipment, ransacking Jewish neighborhoods, and beating up their residents. In the US, huge protests against German policy take place – while in Israel the Strongmen Alliance bombs a German-speaking film screening. In Leipzig, Jewish customers boycott the annual fur-makers' convention, leaving the local industry in shambles. Nazi Germany is facing a worldwide economic boycott.

Meanwhile, Sam presses on. Writing in his journal, he documents how he had just signed a preliminary term sheet with Hartenstein – “The Sam Agreement” (which rhymes in Hebrew). He names Chaim Arlozorov at the top of his list of people most likely to oppose his plan, and describes the Zionist commanding rank's attempts to discredit him as they work to form their own agreement with the Nazi regime as well.

Sam and Anita celebrate their daughter's birthday at their Luxembourg mansion. That same night, a messenger knocks on their door and delivers a telegram – which he hands to Anita. Anita reads the letter and wakes Sam in a fury. She reads it out loud for him, informing him that the Nazis favor his plan and demands to know exactly what “plan” they are talking about. Sam and Anita have an argument. She says: these are the kind of people you want to make a deal with? He responds: Yes, exactly them. She says their one and only purpose is to murder us all, and he responds that they just want us to leave, and this is an opportunity to repopulate the Land of Israel. She says: You shouldn't make deals with the devil. He responds: Depends on what you stand to gain.

MAY 10TH, 1933. German newsreels appear on screen, showing the public book burnings in Berlin, where Jewish literature was set on fire.

Sam visits Wolff in Jerusalem, who informs him he had also given a letter of recommendation to Arlozorov. Feeling cornered, the furious Sam listens as Wolff reads him letters sent from the Zionist leadership who claim Sam represents only himself. Sam decides to work together with Arlozorov: the two men meet in Britain and even co-author a joint telegram sent back to Palestine. Once the story is leaked, the far-right magazine “THE PEOPLE'S FRONT” publishes a scathing article against Arlozorov, titled “The Stalin – Ben Gurion – Hitler Alliance”. The article reads: “Mr. Arlozorov claims that striking a deal with Hitler is the only way to solve Germany's ‘Jewish problem’. The public knows well enough to regard the triple alliance between Stalin, Ben Gurion, and Hitler with contempt. The Jewish people have always known how to recognize traitors and their doctrines, and will react accordingly to this profanity as well.”

That day, Arlozorov takes his wife on an outing in Tel Aviv. They are approached by two men, one of whom pulls out a gun and shoots Arlozorov down. The leaders of the Strongmen Alliance are arrested under suspicion of murder, and Sam realizes that the murder had paved the path for his plan. Two months later, the agreement is signed.

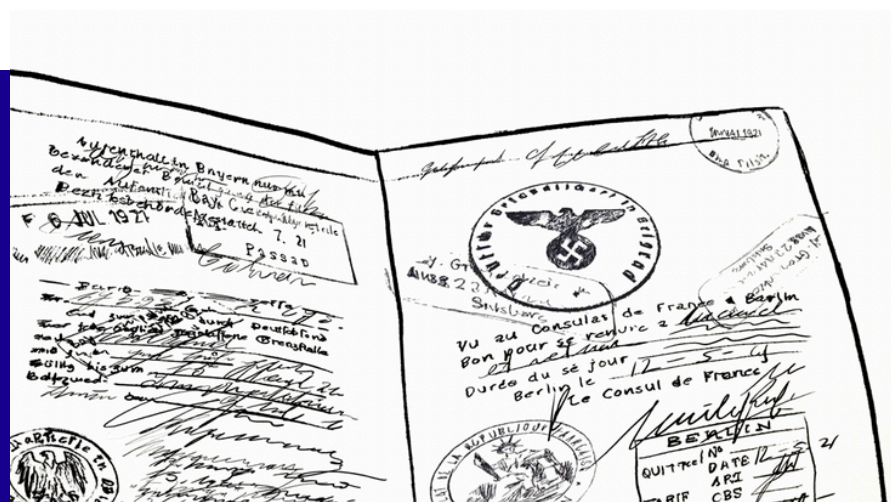


Against the backdrop of immigrants arriving in Israel in 1934, Sam tells of how thousands of immigrants from Germany arrive in Israel, while he and Anita settle in Tel Aviv. At the same time, the trial of the suspects in the Arlozorov murder began in Jerusalem - two Jews from the right-wing political party, who were allegedly influenced by the press of those days.

At the same time, Anita says that she is enjoying herself in Tel Aviv, but that the agreement with the Nazis is tearing her apart inside. She is concerned when she sees a medal issued in Germany, which has a swastika on one side and a Star of David on the other, to "celebrate cooperation". Sam is constantly busy promoting himself. He is interviewed everywhere and even bought a newspaper. In Jerusalem, they fail to prove that the right-wing suspects murdered Arlozorov, and she fears what is to come.

1936 marks three years since the agreement, as huge sums of money arrived in Israel from new immigrants. New settlements are built with the money. In 1938, Anita goes through an incredibly difficult period. Her daughter from her first marriage is killed in an accident, and her hometown of Vienna is occupied by the Nazis as Germany annexes Austria. The discourse between her and Sam intensifies: she sees him as a traitor to his people while he claims that he is saving Jews and property. After the annexation, he was put in charge of the "transfer" from there. But on September 1st, 1939, when World War II is declared, the agreement is terminated. Six years of a controversial agreement that promoted Jewish settlement in the Land of Israel came to an end, but the question lingers on: was it a contract with the devil?

1962. The epilogue takes place after Anita's death. At her grave, Sam says that they separated in 1948, after Anita's entire family was murdered in the Holocaust. Although she was Sam's wife, her family did not make use of the agreement. In the State of Israel, the agreement is considered shameful: it is not taught, it is not talked about, its economic achievements are ignored. And Sam Cohen, who died 14 years after Anita, is an unknown figure whom no one remembers...



ARTISTIC APPROACH



A DEAL WITH THE DEVIL? will show the story of Sam Cohen, who initiated the agreement, and his wife Anita, who opposed it. Archives (visual, written, and audio) and animation make up a significant part of this project, including the seven months the Nazis and Jews worked closely together on the deal.

Through previously hidden and private archives - revisions on the agreement, debates between Anita and Sam, documentation on the murder of Arlozorov - we "embrace" everything that is not visible. Using the rotoscoping method - a process of animation which traces over live-action footage frame by frame - we merge animation with the black and white visuals of the archives.



DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

With the events of October 7th, 2023, in our minds, the question arises: do we negotiate with an evil like Hamas if it means we can save lives? In the 20th century, the question then was whether to negotiate with Nazis to save more people.

The Transfer Agreement "presses" on an uneasy place in Israeli society. The agreement (which also contains the debate surrounding the reason for the murder of Haim Arlozorov) is one of the most significant events that shaped the consciousness of the State of Israel - a dramatic clash between two worldviews, which have existed within Israeli society to this day: principle versus pragmatism. The State of Israel would not have been established without a combination of the two, and in fact the entire human society is built on the combination of the two approaches. But is it possible to be pragmatic with everyone? And does principle become secondary when it comes to human life?

Since World War II, the story of the signing of the agreement has been hidden, and today the knowledge of it belongs to just a few. In the Israel of 2023, who will believe, or even listen to the story, that 90 years ago Jewish representatives from the Zionist movement sat down for negotiations with Nazis or that a key figure in the story was the consul of Nazi Germany in Israel who was married to a Jew? That the man who started the whole move was even a private businessman, a shrewd one, who also wanted to make his own home? And that his wife objected to the agreement until she couldn't live with him anymore and the two separated?

In Israel, where the use of the word "Nazi" leads to system madness, and Wagner's music is banned from being played in certain areas, and collaboration with an "evil" is a stain that is deemed unworthy of discussion. But this dilemma must be questioned: is it appropriate to sacrifice our national honor and our solidarity as Jews and human beings in order to promote utilitarian interests? What is more important? Condemning and boycotting an absolute evil - or saving people?

Through the overarching historical story and the family story of Sam and Anita, we hope that every viewer will ask themselves: What would I do? And was the price paid by those who signed a "deal with the devil" worth it?



AVIDA LIVNY

DIRECTOR

Avida Livny is a graduate of Tel Aviv University's Tisch School of Film and Television and a director of documentary films and series, including *Murder of a Land Dealer* (2023), *Yossi Sarid* (2023), *Murder at Cinema North* (2020), *The Pianist from Ramallah* (2020), and the television series, *A Standard Love Song: Arik Einstein* (2017), *On the Move* (2008), *Looking for Moshe Gez* (2011), *There and Here* (2014).



AYELET EPHRATI

PRODUCER

Ayelet Ephrati is a creative producer with 30 years of experience and the owner of an independent production company in Israel. Throughout her career, Ayelet has produced feature films and drama series both in Israel and abroad, as well as groundbreaking prime-time television programs. For the past 18 years, she has been initiating and producing documentary projects that address social, historical, and cultural issues, and ensuring that important topics are brought to the forefront of the public agenda. Among her filmography is *SHAHIDA* (2008), which premiered at the Berlinale, which chronicles the lives of Palestinian women serving time in prison for complicity in terrorist attacks in Israel. The intimate portrait, filmed over the course of two years, tries to uncover the motivations behind the actions of these women. One of her more recent productions includes *NAYES* (2020), a documentary series on the world of Haredi media, which she also wrote. Ayelet is second-generation Holocaust survivor and is influenced and inspired by this in her work.



DR. NAVA MICHAEL TSABARI

PRODUCER

Nava is the founder and director of the Raya Strauss Center for Family Business Research at the Coller School of Management, Tel Aviv University. She is an acknowledged speaker on this topic in Israel and abroad to academic and professional audiences as well as to families. Nava is the academic leader of the first course targeting family members and practitioners discussing trans-generational succession and family firms. She has won several academic awards for her research. Nava is also a 3rd generation member of the industrial Strauss family. She worked in the group and also served on the board of directors of its publicly traded company.

Der Reichswirtschaftsminister

Berlin W 35, den
Viktoriastraße 34
Fernsprecher Kurfürst 1290-93

19. Mai 1933

Dev. I 2011/33.

Es wird gebeten, dieses Geschäftszeichen und den
Gegenstand bei weiteren Schreiben anzugeben



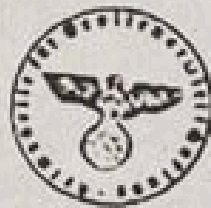
Beglaubigt:

חודדה עם השטן?

die Fa. Hanotaiab Ltd. in Palästina,
s.Hd. von Herrn Rechtsanwalt Moses,

Berlin.

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בימוי אנימציה: סוהיני טל / עורכים: יוני כהן, טומי שלו שפריר / תחקיר גרמניה: יואכים גיקולס-טרויב
תחקיר ודואלי: הגית בן יעקב / מפיקת פוסט: ניצה גלצר / קריינות: שרון אלכסנדר ונעמי לבוב
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