

Fragile Frames

Program at a Glance

Item	Summary
<i>Films</i>	Selections made across 31 digitized reels.
<i>Total Runtime</i>	64 minutes
<i>Date Range</i>	1920s-1960s
<i>Producers Represented</i>	WWII Polish Air Force Film Unit; Nazi Party; American film corporations; Private citizens
<i>Source Collections</i>	Andrzej Pomian papers Alonzo J. Walter Jr. motion picture film Charles E. Stuart papers Herman Axelbank motion picture film collection Ronald S. Anderson papers

In-Process Art Direction Notes 20260619

Only *Polish Bombers' Holiday* is shown in its entirety. All other sections are created from edited selections. Editing is currently in process. The completed film should be ready by the first week of July.

The films in the shared drive ("Nitrate Films 2026") are the original, non-edited, full-length, full-frame segments. They're meant to provide an overall understanding of the content at this time.

Film Inventory

Film 1: Polish Bombers' Holiday

Film 2: WWII Polish Paratroopers

Year: circa 1943

Producer/Production Entity: Polish Ministry of Information: Polish Air Force Film Unit

Format: 35mm nitrate film

Description

Documentary films depicting the operational activities, training, and welfare of Polish aircrews serving in the Royal Air Force (RAF) during World War II.

Subject Themes

- World War, 1939-1945
- Poland - History - Occupation, 1939-1945
- Poland - History, Military

Historical Significance

The Polish Air Force Film Unit was an official military filmmaking and photography outfit formed in the United Kingdom on March 4, 1942. Comprising Polish military personnel with pre-war film experience, it documented the operational activities, training, and welfare of Polish aircrews serving in the Royal Air Force (RAF) during World War II.

Collection: Andrzej Pomian papers (2009C45)

- **Biography:** Andrzej Pomian (born Bohdan Salacinski; 1911-2008) was a Polish émigré journalist and author who worked for many years for Radio Free Europe. During World War II, he was a ranking officer in the Information and Propaganda Bureau of Poland's clandestine Home Army, the largest underground organization in Nazi-occupied Europe. Extracted from Poland in April 1944, Pomian spent the next ten years with the Polish government in exile in London before moving to the United States in 1955.
- **HILA acquisition date:** Gift, 2009
- **Rights status:** Public domain

Film 3: Soviet Russia Through the Eyes of an American

Year: circa 1926-1932

Producer/Production Entity: Charles E. Stuart

Format: 35mm nitrate film

Description

Footage taken in the Soviet Union 1926-1932 by Charles E. Stuart, an American engineer serving as a consultant to the Soviet government on its coal mining reorganization. Footage was later edited for release by Imperial Distributing Corp. with a score and narration by radio announcer Norman Brokenshire as *Soviet Russia Through the Eyes of an American* in 1935. The film was re-released in 1941 under the title *Inside Russia*.

Subject Themes

- World War, 1939-1945
- Poland - History - Occupation, 1939-1945
- Poland - History, Military

Historical Significance

This travelogue of Russia begins with footage of Moscow and includes private scenes in the Kremlin with such leaders as Josef Stalin. Also seen are shots of collectives, factories, open air schools, nurseries and model homes for workers, as well as landscapes and cathedrals. Views of squalid living conditions and the huts in which many peasants reside are also shown. Next, the filmmakers journey to Stalingrad, up the Volga River to Kazan, then eastward into the Caucasus Mountains and the city of Nazzan. Tivbuli and Tiflis, capital of Georgia, and Batum, in the oil fields, are seen. In the Crimea on the Black Sea, the winter palaces of the nobility under the Czar, which have been opened to the public and converted into health resorts, are shown. The filmmakers' final stop is Kharkov in the Ukraine.

Collection: Charles E. Stuart papers (80067)

- **Biography:** Charles E. Stuart, American engineer and consultant to the Soviet government on its coal mining reorganization from 1926 to 1932.
- **Acquisition date:** Gift, 1980
- **Rights status:** Public domain

Film 4: Selections from WWII Degeto Weltspiegel films

Year: circa 1939-1943

Producer/Production Entity: Tobis Film/Wehrmacht (Germany Army)

Format: 35mm nitrate film

Description

Produced films portraying German military victories and advances during the war; Adolf Hitler, the Nazi leadership, and major political events; heroic portrayals of German soldiers and commanders.

Subject Themes

- World War, 1939-1945
- National socialism - Germany
- Propaganda, German

Historical Significance

Degeto Weltspiegel were short Nazi propaganda/news films that played in German cinemas from 1939 to 1943, designed to present Germany's military campaigns and political objectives in a favorable light.

Collection: Alonzo J. Walter Jr. motion picture film (80023)

- **Biography:** Unknown. Assumed to be American military officer.
- **Acquisition date:** Gift, 1980
- **Rights status:** Public domain

Film 5: Rice Farming in Japan: Garden Culture of the Orient

Year: undated (circa 1940s)

Producer/Production Entity: Ronald S. Anderson, Center for Japanese Studies, University of Michigan

Format: 35mm nitrate film

Description

Documentary footage portraying rice farming in Japan, circa 1940s.

Subject Themes

- Japan - Social conditions
- Japan - Land reform
- Japan - History - Allied occupation, 1945-1952

Historical Significance

Visual record of rural life, agricultural labor practices, and food production in Japan during a period marked by wartime mobilization, scarcity, and economic transformation.

Collection: Ronald S. Anderson papers (86021)

- **Biography:** Ronald S. Anderson, American educator and secondary school teacher in Japan, 1929-1935. United States civil education officer, Kinki region, Japan, 1946-1949.
- **Acquisition date:** Gift, 1986
- **Rights status:** Public domain

Film 6: "Khrushchev in Indonesia"

Year: circa 1960

Producer/Production Entity: Unknown

Format: 35mm nitrate film

Description

Unidentified documentary footage of landscapes, places and people in Indonesia, including Jakarta and Bali. Film originally labeled, "Khrushchev in Indonesia, 1956"; Khrushchev actually visited Indonesia in February 1960.

Subject Themes

- Unidentified film
- Indonesia - Foreign relations
- Cold War

Historical Significance

Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev made a state visit to Indonesia in February 1960, touring Jakarta, Bali, and other regions alongside President Sukarno. The diplomatic tour cemented a powerful political and military alliance between the two nations during the height of the Cold War.

Collection: Herman Axelbank motion picture film collection (79073)

- **Biography:** Herman Axelbank (1900-1979) was born in Novo-Konstantinov, in the Russian Empire, on May 30, 1900; his family moved to New York in 1909. Fascinated with film-making from childhood, Axelbank got a job as an office boy for Samuel Goldfish at Goldwyn Pictures, New York City, in 1916. The news of the February Revolution in Russia captured the young Axelbank's imagination. "Wish I could take moving pictures over there; we don't have any of our own [American Revolution] in 1775," he remembered remarking to a co-worker. Axelbank commissioned and collected films related to Soviet Russia and communism for over fifty years - the Axelbank collection consists of 266 reels containing over 250,000 feet of film, primarily newsreel and documentary footage.

Of note: In most instances the names of the cameramen and other circumstances surrounding the source of these films have not been preserved; Axelbank's records were destroyed in a 1959 fire at the facility where he stored his flammable nitrate film.

- **Acquisition date:** Gift, 1979
- **Rights status:** Orphaned works - *assumed public domain*

Film 7: Steel manufacturing

Year: undated

Producer/Production Entity: Charles E. Stuart

Format: 35mm nitrate film

Description

Unidentified documentary footage of steel manufacturing, believed to be taken at Reading Chain & Block (now *Reading Crane, Co.*), Reading, PA.

Subject Themes

- Steel industry and trade - United States
- Manufacturing industries - United States

Historical Significance

Visual record of steel manufacturing factories and infrastructure in the United States, 1930s-1940s.

Collection: Charles E. Stuart papers (80067)

- **Biography:** Charles E. Stuart, American engineer
- **Acquisition date:** Gift, 1980
- **Rights status:** Public domain

Film 8: The World's Heavyweight Championship Boxing Contest, 1933

Year: 1933

Producer/Production Entity: Sporting Events, Inc

Format: 35mm nitrate film

Description

The 1933 World's Heavyweight Championship Boxing Contest, between World Champion Jack Sharkey and Primo Carnera, Madison Square Garden Bowl in Long Island City. Film title cards indicate event is "for the benefit of 'Free Milk for Babies Inc.'", listing Mrs. Wm. R. Hearst as Chairman.

Subject Themes

- Boxing - United States - History - 20th century
- Professional sports - United States

Historical Significance

Visual documentation of one of the most popular forms of mass entertainment during the interwar period, capturing the athletes, spectators, and promotional culture surrounding professional boxing at the height of its popularity.

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- **Acquisition date:** Gift, 1979
- **Rights status:** Public domain