

## Finding Aid for THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH Collection

**Collection Processed by:**  
Sandy Lu (February 22, 2017)

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Revised, Joel Parham (January 18, 2026)

### OVERVIEW OF THE COLLECTION

**Origination/Creator:** Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer Studios  
**Title of Collection:** THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH Collection  
**Date of Collection:** 1935–1981  
**Physical Description:** 17 boxes; 6.5 linear feet  
**Identification:** Special Collection #15  
**Repository:** American Film Institute  
AFI Archives  
2021 N. Western Ave.  
Los Angeles, CA

### RIGHTS AND RESTRICTIONS

**Access Restrictions:** Collection is open for research.  
**Copyright:** The copyright interests in this collection remain with the creator. For more information, contact the AFI Archives.  
**Acquisition Method:** Donated by Sam White (1982).

### BIOGRAPHICAL/HISTORY NOTE

*The Forty Days of Musa Dagh* is a novel by Franz Werfel. Published in German in 1933, it was translated to English in fall 1934. Werfel was inspired to write his novel after a trip to the Middle East during which he met Armenian survivors of the Young Turk regime. Werfel heard stories about the struggle at Musa Dagh ("The Mountain of Moses" in English), where some 5,000 Armenians resisted Turkish soldiers for fifty-three days before French and British troops intervened. Although it's a work of fiction, the real-life Armenian genocide features prominently in the book. The book earned praise from American literary critics, as well as Armenian-Americans who referred to Werfel as a "friend God has sent." Many drew a connection between the treatment of Armenians during the Ottoman Empire, with the then-contemporary treatment of Jews by the Nazi regime.

Before the book was translated into English, executives at Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM) purchased the screen rights for \$15,000. After a review by censor Joseph Breen and MGM-head Louis B. Mayer, limited political pushback was anticipated. David O. Selznick was put in charge of

the production, and “was the first to sense the danger in the project.”<sup>1</sup> To ameliorate Turkish audiences, the film’s plot was to be revised so that, rather than blaming the whole of the Turkish government, just one single Turkish person would be implicated for the atrocities of the Armenian genocide. Selznick also asked his contacts at the Motion Picture Producers and Distributors of America (MPPDA) to notify the Turkish government of the project.

Realizing that the film might cause a stir, Frederick Herron at the MPPDA implored Selznick and other MGM executives to approach the project with extreme caution. Herron recommended that the film take place twenty years earlier than the novel to avoid association with the Ottoman Empire. Herron also urged Selznick to stress the virtues of the Turkish people in the film. MPPDA’s major concern was that, should the film cast Turkey in a negative light, the French might also boycott it—given the strong relationship between the two countries. French audiences made up a large portion of film revenues at the time, and the American film industry could not afford to lose those profits.

Then the State Department and the Turkish embassy got involved. Turkish media outlets publicly attacked MGM for attempting the project, accused the studio of actively seeking to destroy Turkey’s reputation, and encouraged Turkish citizens to boycott. The project was then halted in late 1935, yet it was revisited in 1938.

During World War II, most American films were restricted in Germany and Italy. With diminished European profits anyway, MGM considered making the movie for solely American audiences. The Turkish press and American authorities caught wind soon enough and quickly extinguished the possibility of the film’s production.

Following World War II, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH became “the most ‘on again, off again’ major literary property in the history of American motion pictures.”<sup>2</sup> MGM poured massive financial resources into the film’s production, but the film was always thwarted by political pressure. MGM eventually sold the literary rights, and the result was the 1982 film, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, written by Alex Hakobian. It was filmed in Malibu, California on a budget of \$1 million and cobbled together from early drafts of the screenplay.

Since then, several attempts have been made to adapt Werfel’s novel for the screen. In 1989, a West German company announced its plans to shoot the film on a budget of \$25 million – which

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<sup>1</sup> Welky, David. “Global Hollywood Versus National Pride: The Battle to Film *THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH*,” *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 59 No. 3, Spring 2006: pp. 35–43.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

never panned out. Both Hollywood stars Mel Gibson and Sylvester Stallone have expressed interest in producing the movie.<sup>3</sup>

## SCOPE AND CONTENT NOTE

THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH collection includes iterations of the screenplay – dated between 1935 and 1981. Additionally, a photocopy of Werfel’s novel and three books on Armenian history are included in the collection.

The collection is divided into two series: Scripts, and Research. The Scripts series is arranged chronologically, then by author. Script materials include work by Talbot Jennings, Carey Wilson, Jan Lustig, Elick Moll, Kathryn Berman, Neil Paterson, Guy Green, Guy Green & Neil Paterson, Howard Clewes, Baruch Cohon & Samuel White, Ronald Harwood, Clarke Reynolds, Larry Hilbrand & Samuel White, and Alex Hakobian. This series retains its received original order. The Research series is comprised of books which are arranged alphabetically.

## CONTAINER LIST

### Series 1: Scripts

#### Box 1

- f. 1            Scripts, Jennings, Talbot, Script No. 1729, File Copy, 1935, April 15
- f. 2            Scripts, Jennings, Talbot, Script No. 1726, File Copy, 1935, April 15
- f. 3            Scripts, Jennings, Talbot, Script No. 1725, File Copy, 1935, April 15
- f. 4            Scripts, Jennings, Talbot, Script No. 1728, File Copy, 1935, April 15
- f. 5            Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Script No. 0560, Vault Copy, Temporary Incomplete, File Copy, 1935, February 7
- f. 6            Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Script No. 1925, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, February 7

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<sup>3</sup> Yigal, Schleifer, “Armenia’s Doomed Quest to Recruit Steven Spielberg,” *The Atlantic*, 2012 February 15. <https://www.theatlantic.com/international/archive/2012/02/armenias-doomed-quest-to-recruit-steven-spielberg/253131>.

THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH Collection

- f. 7 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Script No. 1850, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, February 18–19
- f. 8 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Script No. 0803, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, Vault Copy, 1935, February 18–19
- f. 9 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Screenplay, 1935, April 23
- f. 10 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, No. 1946, File Copy, Vault Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, April 23
- f. 11 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, No. 1948, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, April 23
- f. 12 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, No. 1949, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, April 23
- f. 13 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, No. 1947, File Copy, Temporary Incomplete, 1935, April 23
- f. 14 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 1st Draft Wilson
- f. 15 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Script No. 0816, File Copy, Temporary Complete, 1935, April 23

**Box 2**

- f. 1 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script No. 8181, 1935, April 25
- f. 2 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script No. 0649, 1935, April 25
- f. 3 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script Original #2, Scenes 122 to end, 1935, April 25 with changes through June 14
- f. 4 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Carey Wilson Working Copy, 1935, June 19
- f. 5 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script, Carey Wilson, 1935, June 19

**Box 3**

- f. 1 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script No. 15666, 1935, June 19

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- f. 2 Scripts, Wilson, Carey, Script No. 15695, 1935, June 19
- f. 3 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, Script No. Two, 1956, December 11
- f. 4 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, Script Original Treatment, 1956, December 14
- f. 5 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, Script Treatment No. Three, 1956, December 14
- f. 6 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, Script Treatment No. Four, 1956, December 14
- f. 7 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], Script Treatment No. 15, 1957, January 29
- f. 8 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], Script Treatment No. 13, 1957, January 29
- f. 9 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], Script Treatment No. 14, 1957, January 29
- f. 10 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], Script Treatment No. 10, 1957, January 29

**Box 4**

- f. 1 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], Script Treatment 40 DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, No. 4, 1957, January 29
- f.2 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title] Treatment, No. 9, 1957, January 29
- f. 3 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title] Treatment, Original, 1957, January 29
- f. 4 Scripts, Lustig, Jan, FROM EVERY MOUNTAIN SIDE [working title], No. 14, 1957, January 29 – February 8
- f. 5 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Script "File Copy", 1958, December 9
- f. 6 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Vault Copy, 1958, December 9

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- f. 7 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Vault Copy, Dialogue Treatment, 1958, December 9
- f. 8 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Vault Copy, Rough Treatment, 1958, December 11
- f. 9 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], File Copy, Treatment Outline, 1958, December 29
- f. 10 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Vault Copy, Treatment Outline, 1958, December 29
- f. 11 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Vault Copy, 1959, January 12
- f. 12 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Vault Copy, Notes and Experiments, 1959, January 19

**Box 5**

- f. 1 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Vault Copy, Notes and Experiments, 1959, January 19
- f. 2 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title], Vault Copy, 1959, January 22
- f. 3 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], 1959, January 22
- f. 4 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE HILLS OF HOME [working title] Original, 1959, January 22
- f. 5 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title] Draft of Screenplay ORIGINAL, 1959, February 16
- f. 6 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Draft of Screenplay Original + Part Dictation, 1959, February 16

**Box 6**

- f. 1–4 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], ORIGINAL, 1959, March 9

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f. 5–6 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions, Vault Copy, Volume 1

**Box 7**

f. 1 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions, Incomplete, 1959, March 9

f. 2–3 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., 1959, March 23

f. 4 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Notes, 1959, May 5

f. 5 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], New Step Outline with changes, 1959, May 6

f. 6 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], New Step Outline with changes, Original 1959, May 6

f. 7 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], New Step Outline with changes, 1959, May 8

f. 8 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], New Step Outline with changes, Vault Copy, 1959, May 8

f. 9 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], New Step Outline with changes, Originals, 1959, May 8

f. 10 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Incomplete Script, Original, 1959, May 25

f. 11 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Original, 1959, June 8

**Box 8**

f. 1 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., File Copy, 1959, June 8

f. 2 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], General Outline, 1959, June 29

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- f. 3 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], General Outline, 1959, June 29
- f. 4 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Vault Copy, 1959, June 30
- f. 5 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Section of Script, 1959, June 30
- f. 6–8 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Section of Script, 1959, June 30
- f. 9–11 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Original, File Copy, 1959, June 30

**Box 9**

- f. 1–2 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Vault Copy, Part I, 1959, June 30
- f. 3–4 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Original, 1959, July 24
- f. 5 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Temporary Complete, 1959, July 24
- f. 6 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Temporary Complete, File Copy, Composite Script, 1959, July 24

**Box 10**

- f. 1 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Temporary Complete, 1959, July 24
- f. 2 Scripts, Moll, Elick, THE DAYS OF WRATH [working title], Julian Blaustein Productions Inc., Vault Copy, Composite Script, 1959, July 24
- f. 3 Scripts, Berman, Kathryn, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Breakdown of Book, 1962, September 7
- f. 4 Scripts, Berman, Kathryn, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Breakdown of Book, 1962, September 7

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- f. 5 Scripts, Berman, Kathryn, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Breakdown of Script by Neil Paterson, 1963, September 12
- f. 6–9 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Treatment, 1962, November 5
- f. 10 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Outline of Approach, Original, 1962, November 8
- f. 11 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Outline of Approach, Composite Script, File Copy, 1962, November 8
- f. 12 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Outline of Approach, 1962, November 8

**Box 11**

- f. 1 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Original, 1963, July 2
- f. 2 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, File Copy, Part I, First Draft, 1963, August 1
- f. 3 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., Opening Script Scenes, 1963, September 9
- f. 4 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Vault Copy, Composite, 1963, September 12
- f. 5 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., File Copy, Composite, 1963, September 12

**Box 12**

- f. 1 Scripts, Paterson, Neil, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Vault Copy, 1964, June 17
- f. 2 Scripts, Green, Guy, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, File Copy, 1964, February 17 – April 13

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- f. 3 Scripts, Green, Guy, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, File Copy, Semifinal, Undated, 1964, July 16
- f. 4 Scripts, Green, Guy, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Semifinal, Undated, received 1964, July 16
- f. 5 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., File Copy, Composite Script, 1964, April 14

**Box 13**

- f. 1 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., 1964, April 14
- f. 2 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., Vault Copy, 1964, April 14
- f. 3 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., File Copy, Composite Script, 1964, August 6
- f. 4 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., Original, 1964, August 6
- f. 5 Scripts, Green, Guy and Neil Paterson, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Pandro S. Berman Productions Inc., File Copy + Handwritten Cast List, 1964, August 6

**Box 14**

- f. 1 Scripts, Clewes, Howard, THE 40 DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 1969, December 2
- f. 2 Scripts, Clewes, Howard, THE 40 DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Screenplay by Howard Clewes, 1969, December 22
- f. 3 Scripts, Cohon, Baruch and Samuel White, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 3rd Draft, Screenplay by Baruch Cohon and Samuel White, Producer Samuel White, 1973, January
- f. 4 Scripts, Harwood, Ronald, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, A treatment for a film by Ronald Harwood, 1976, June

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- f. 1 Scripts, Harwood, Ronald, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, 1st Draft  
Screenplay, 1976, September 8

**Box 15**

- f. 1 Scripts, Harwood, Ronald, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, Harwood Repro  
Copy 1976, Producer James B. Harris, 1976, September 8
- f. 2 Scripts, Reynolds, Clarke, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH, First Draft  
Screenplay, Producer Samuel White, 1978, April
- f. 1 Scripts, Hilbrand, Larry and Samuel White, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH,  
First Draft Screenplay by Larry Hilbrand and S. White, 1978, July
- f. 2 Scripts, Hilbrand, Larry and Samuel White, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH,  
Tele-version, Adapted from the screenplay, by Larry Hilbrand and S. White,  
Producer Samuel White, 1978, July
- f. 3 Scripts, Hakobian, Alex, THE FORTY DAYS OF MUSA DAGH,  
Screenplay by Alex Hakobian, Shooting Script, 1981, April 14

**Series 2: Research**

**Box 16**

- f. 1–2 Research, Books  
Green, Frederick Davis, *Armenian Massacres and Turkish Tyranny*. New York:  
American Oxford Press, 1896. [stamped "MGM Research Dept"]  
Buxton, Noel and Rev. Harold Buxton, *Travel and Politics in Armenia*. New  
York: MacMillan Company, 1914. [stamped "MGM Research Dept"]
- f. 3–4 Research, Books  
Bryce, Viscount, *The Treatment of Armenians in the Ottoman Empire*, 1915–  
1916. London: GP Putnam's Sons, 1916. [stamped "MGM Research Dept"]  
Vahan, V. C., *History of Armenia, Volume 1*. Boston: Ararat Publishing Co.,  
1963. [stamped "MGM Research Dept"]

**Box 17**

- f. 1–2 Research, Books  
Werfel, Franz, *The Forty Days of Musa Dagh*. New York: Viking Press, 1934.  
[photocopy]