

## The Kirshner File

The making of *Nuremberg*

Sandra Schulberg's five-year quest to restore a historically important documentary about the Nuremberg Nazi war crimes trial, one of the greatest courtroom dramas in modern history, was a labour of love.

The film, *Nuremberg: Its Lessons For Today*, which was screened recently at the Toronto Jewish Film Festival, captivated her in no small part due to the fact that it was made by her late father, Stuart, who went on to forge a successful career as a television producer in the United States.

Commissioned by the U.S. War Department and the American military government in occupied Germany, the movie was completed in 1948 and widely shown in western Germany.

For a variety of reasons, the U.S. government blocked its distribution to American theatres, thereby consigning it to obscurity until Sandra Schulberg and her colleague, Josh Waletzky, came along to rescue it from gathering further dust.

Premiered in Holland last November in conjunction with a ceremony in The Hague in which Nuremberg prosecutor Benjamin Ferencz was awarded the Dutch equivalent of the Nobel Prize, *Nuremberg* was subsequently shown to 450 high school students in Germany. Schulberg, who is based in New York City, recalls that particular screening with poignancy.

As she put it, "Although Germany does a good job of educating its youth about World War II and the Holocaust, I think the film was a revelation to the 16- and 17-year-old kids who saw it. I told them that they were completely innocent of any of the crimes portrayed in the film, and that they and their fellow teenagers outside Germany were the hope of the world and that it was up to them to wear the mantle of the Nuremberg legacy and fight for peace and justice."

After being presented at the Berlin Film Festival last winter and receiving its North American premiere in Toronto this past April, *Nuremberg* is scheduled to appear at the Jerusalem Film Festival in mid-July, followed by its general release in the United States in September.

As Schulberg suggests, the story of how this film came to be made is the stuff of post-

war politics and intrigue. While preparing for the Nuremberg tribunal – which convened on Nov. 20, 1945 and ended on Oct. 1, 1946 – the lead U.S. prosecutor, U.S. Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson, decided to use film and photographic evidence to convict the Nazi war criminals on trial. Among a group of 23 defendants, they included Hermann Goring, Adolf Hitler's second-in-command, and Albert Speer, the minister of armaments and production.

Jackson believed that a cinematic account of the trial and of the rise and fall of Nazi Germany would achieve two related objectives: to show the German public that the Nazi leadership had been treated fairly, and to leave a permanent record of Nazi aggression and crimes against humanity.

A special U.S. film team run by the Office of Strategic Services, the predecessor of the Central Intelligence Agency, was formed for this purpose under the direction of the Hollywood director, John Ford, whose critically acclaimed movies ran the gamut from *Stagecoach* to *How Green Was My Valley*.

Assigned to Ford's team were, among others, Stuart Schulberg and his older brother,



Sandra Schulberg

Budd, whose iconic novel, *What Makes Sammy Run?*, had been published in 1941. They were the sons of former Paramount studio chief B.P. Schulberg.

The brothers were not unknown quantities to Ford. During the war, Stuart served with the OSS' photographic branch, which was headed by Ford. Animated by Jackson's request, Ford dispatched Stuart to Europe in the summer

of 1945 to acquire incriminating Nazi film footage that could be used at the forthcoming Nuremberg trial.

Budd joined the hunt, and during the next four months, the Schulbergs and their colleagues found what they needed, including the photo archives of Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's personal photographer.

Stuart wrote and directed *Nuremberg* – the official documentary about the trial – while his colleague, Joseph Zigman, edited it. Eric Pommer, the producer of the Weimar-era film, *The Blue Angel*, supervised the production. Excerpts from two American films, *The Nazi Plan* and *Nazi Concentration Camps*, were incorporated into *Nuremberg*.

Seventy-eight minutes in length, *Nuremberg* would be an integral component of the U.S. de-Nazification campaign, such as it was, in postwar Germany. Shown to a German audience for the first time in Stuttgart in November 1948, it was then exhibited around Germany over the next year and a half, eliciting a wide range of reactions.

In a reflection of its looming rivalry with the United States during the Cold War period, the Soviet Union produced its own documentary on the trial, *Judgment of the People*.

Much to Stuart's probable disappointment, *Nuremberg* was shelved after its screening in Germany. John Norris, an American reporter on the staff of the *Washington Post*, investigated the U.S. government's decision, but he never really got to the bottom of it. Nor could he establish why the United States refused to sell the film to Pare Lorentz, an American producer. Later, Norris concluded that *Nuremberg* had been filed away because the Truman administration feared that it might cause a backlash in Germany and interfere with the U.S. goal of rebuilding Germany's economy through the Marshall Plan.

With *Nuremberg* suppressed, Stuart continued to produce de-Nazification films for the U.S. military government's documentary film unit in Berlin. During the early 1950s, he and a partner produced feature films in western

Germany. Subsequently, he was recruited to administer the Marshall Plan's motion picture section in Paris, where Sandra Schulberg was born.

In 1956, having returned to the United States, he and Budd made *Wind Across the Everglades*, a feature film, for Warner Brothers. Returning to the documentary form in 1961, he joined *David Brinkley's Journal*, the first

TV news magazine program. In 1969, he was hired as the producer of NBC's *Today* show. He died in 1979 at the age of 56 while producing an NBC special.

To Sandra Schulberg's regret, she never discussed her father's early projects, including *Nuremberg*, with him. But after being asked by an American film scholar how his de-Nazification films had influenced his career at NBC, Schulberg – a seasoned producer and film financier – took a new-found interest in his work.

Six years ago, the director of the Berlin Film Festi-

val asked Schulberg to curate a series on the Marshall Plan films that her dad had supervised. He proposed launching it with *Nuremberg*, which she had never seen.

As a result of these deliberations, Schulberg became interested in her father's film, the original picture negative and sound elements of which were lost or destroyed.

She and Waletzky – a documentary film director, editor and writer – created a new 35mm negative and reconstructed the soundtrack.

The restoration, which cost just under \$200,000, allows audiences to hear Jackson's opening and closing statements as well as the testimony of the Nazi defendants and their defence lawyers.

She is pleased with the film, saying it stands as a dire warning to politicians and nations planning and waging what Jackson described as "aggressive war."

But she is sorry that her uncle Budd did not live to see *Nuremberg*. "I'm sad he died eight weeks before I could show him the first print," she said. "But he knew I was very close, and I think he was proud."



Stuart Schulberg during World War II

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