



Hermann Goering, left, and Rudolf Hess, centre, were among the defendants at the Nuremberg trial, from 1945 to 1946

First UK screening of greatest courtroom drama in history

An English language version of the Nuremberg trial has never been seen – until now, says Frances Gibb

It has been billed as the greatest courtroom drama in history. The Nuremberg trial was iconic, first because of the crimes of those in the dock but also because it was the first public international trial, intended for screening to a wide audience. But the United States Government quashed the film's release except in Germany; and so an English language version was never seen.

Now, for the first time in Britain, the film of the courtroom proceedings in 1945-46 have been screened — first at an event hosted by the Attorney-General Dominic Grieve, and then at one hosted by Geoffrey Robertson, QC, the leading international human rights lawyer and head of Doughty Street Chambers. The trial, Mr Grieve said, was "a defining moment in the history of international justice, establishing principles that are still in use today".

Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today is the result of a painstaking project of recovery by Sandra Schulberg, herself a filmmaker and daughter of the original director-writer, Stuart Schulberg, after the original 35mm film negative and soundtrack were lost or destroyed.

The documentary shows the trial of 22 Nazi leaders under the rules established by the Allies who set up an international military tribunal, the formal framework for the trial, meshing their legal codes so that the prosecutions could be conducted jointly. British prosecutors played a key role, Mr Grieve

said: the prosecution team was led by Sir Hartley Shawcross, then Attorney-General, and his predecessor Sir David Maxwell-Fyfe. Lord Justice Geoffrey Lawrence served as president and Mr Justice Norman Birkett was one of the alternate judges.

The original film, *Nuremberg*, was made under the direction of US Marine Corps sergeant Stuart Schulberg, using signal corps camera teams. It was completed for the US Department of War in 1948. Only after the death of Sandra's mother in 2002 did she and her brothers, clearing out her New York city apartment, find the original film posters for *Nuremberg* and boxes of documents about making the film.

They set about creating a new negative from the best surviving print and reconstructed the soundtrack. More significantly, the discovery of letters and government memos disclosed the behind-the-scenes battle over the film's release. "Robert Jackson [US chief prosecutor] had made the decision that they should film as much as possible of the trial," Schulberg said. "They formed a documentary working party with delegates from each of the nations involved. They were very sensitive to charges of victors' justice, so Jackson and other key prosecutors wanted a record so that people could make their own judgment."

Jackson pressed hard for its release. "But at that time the Americans wanted to forget about the Nazis and focus on the Russians who were becoming the new enemy: they could only keep one enemy in mind at a time." US Secretary of the Army, Kenneth Royall, barred its release.

The contents of the film are familiar but still shock. The film shows how the international prosecutors built their cases using the Nazis' own films and records. A special Office of Strategic Services film unit, under the command of

the film director John Ford, located Nazi motion pictures that were shown in the court as evidence. Courtroom scenes of the defendants — Hermann Goering, Rudolf Hess, Joachim von Ribbentrop, Albert Speer and others — listening on headphones and of the prosecutors outlining the charges are spliced with footage of early marches and Nazi power displays and invasions of neighbouring countries; brutal treatment of protesters; concentration camps and their victims; medical experiments; mass graves. There is a new narration by the actor Lev Schreiber and the music has been reconstructed.

But the aim, Schulberg says, was not to make changes. "I added a few first names for the purposes of understanding." The trial was conducted in four languages so there was no single language version. When she eventually saw the American-English version, it did not contain voices and where possible she brought those in, including the voices of the defendants.

The reading of the verdicts by Lord Justice Lawrence on October 1, 1946 and the sentences themselves remain dramatic — not least because of the tribunal's determination to affirm due process and the rule of law, which saw three of the 21 defendants present acquitted. Eleven were sentenced to death by hanging (Goering committed suicide waiting for the gallows); and seven were jailed, for terms of ten years to life.

Thanks, first, to the decision of the prosecutors to film the proceedings, as well as to both Schulbergs, the powerful message of the trial survives to resonate today. Geoffrey Robertson noted the "disgraceful decision" of the English Bar in 1945 not to allow any QCs to defend those in the dock. But the new film, he said, was a "terrific representation of the evidence" and, as Jackson had hoped, would continue through the most compelling medium and its shocking imagery to confound any conspiracy theorists and Holocaust deniers.

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