

arte
DISTRIBUTION



The lost film of Nuremberg, ***It's lessons for today***

A 52' documentary directed by **Jean-Christophe Klotz**

Produced by **ZADIG Production & ARTE France**

PROVISIONNAL DELIVERY : SEPTEMBER 2020



Pitch

In summer 1945, at the end of World War 2, the great film director John Ford, who was then the head of the OSS Field Photographic Branch, the US forces' film unit, assigned brothers Budd and Stuart Schulberg to carry out a special mission. Their task was to track down and assemble archive footage and photographs of the crimes of the Nazi regime to be used as evidence against the 24 leading Nazis scheduled to stand trial in Nuremberg in the autumn.

So began a highly risky three-month investigation that took the two young men across a Europe

devastated by war in search of visual evidence of the most heinous crime in history.

Our collective memory of the Nazi period is founded on the evidence collected by the Schulbergs and shown during the Nuremberg Trials. The evidence itself is famous, but records of the Schulbergs' search are few and far between. This documentary takes an inside look at this extraordinary mission and asks profound questions about the process of writing history.

Statement of intent

How will this documentary differ from other documentaries about Nuremberg? What will we learn from it? How will it resonate with the present?

This will not be a history documentary about the Nuremberg Trials as such. There have already been several of those. Rather, it will tell the story of two carefree young Americans from a gilded Hollywood background (their father was the all-powerful Paramount studio chief) who were brought face to face with History with a capital H and came to play an important part in it.

The documentary will tell the story of the Schulberg brothers' race against time to gather visual evidence of the Nazis' crimes. With only four months until the trial, they set off hell-for-leather across a Europe in ruins, using all manner of stratagems to hunt down footage and photographs. At times, their search is reminiscent of a detective story novel or a spy thriller, as when Budd and Stuart try to win over Nazi officials to achieve their ends, or when they venture into the Soviet zone in search of a secret stash.

While Stuart was examining negatives with Heinrich Hoffmann, Hitler's personal photographer, Budd was travelling to arrest Leni Riefenstahl and force her to identify Nazi dignitaries in particular archive sequences.

As the documentary follows in the Schulberg brothers' footsteps, it will reveal a number of facts that were either unknown or deliberately omitted from official versions of history, such as the American authorities' decision to suppress the film of the first Nuremberg trial made by Stuart Schulberg immediately after the war, to avoid portraying Germany in too negative a light.

The visual evidence shown at the trial played a

major role in securing the convictions of the Nazi dignitaries accused. The terrible narrative of the Nazi atrocities was in large part written by the Schulberg's four-month mission, under the massive constraints of an extremely tight schedule, physical dangers and political pressures. The documentary will at no point contest the facts of that narrative, but it will enable us to reflect in the present on how history is written. Among other things, we will of course reflect on the fact that this momentous task was entrusted to two fledgling Hollywood film-makers.

The present-day reflection will occur towards the end of the documentary in connection with the rediscovery and restoration of Stuart Schulberg's film by his daughter, Sandra Schulberg. She and her team asked themselves fundamental - and practical - questions about how historical discourse is constructed. The answers they came up with included innumerable hours of work on the soundtrack, re-synchronizing the recordings to ensure that the trial protagonists' own voices are as audible as possible.

Again and again, throughout the documentary, the Schulbergs' story will raise profound questions, such as whether selecting excerpts from the trials and using ellipses is tantamount to a *mise-en-scène*, or whether it is ever really possible for a cinematic or historical narrative to be objective.

Our chosen form means that we will not be engaging in analytical comparisons, but telling a story, albeit one that prompts questions. As historian Sylvie Lindeperg aptly puts it, «A filmed trial is not the trial itself, but the film of the trial.» Our exploration of the complex, fascinating issues raised by the Schulberg brothers' story will take us into the realms of cinema, ethics and historiography.

Synopsis

Nuremberg Law Courts, Germany. 20 November 1945

Works to enlarge courtroom 600 have just been completed. Robert Jackson, the US Chief Prosecutor, seems satisfied. He has personally supervised the reorganization of the courtroom to accommodate a seemingly incongruous feature: a large cinema screen.

A trial unlike any that has ever taken place now begins: 24 leading Nazis are accused of conspiracy to wage a war of aggression, crimes against peace, war crimes, and crimes against humanity.

During the first few days of the trial hearings, Jackson announces that a film will now be shown on the screen in the middle of the courtroom.

The lights go out, except for a single row of neon lights above the dock where Hermann Göring, Rudolf Hess, Karl Doenitz, Franz Von Papen and the other accused are seated.

The film begins. For the next four hours, all those in the courtroom are exposed to image after image of terrible atrocities - an accelerated descent into the depths of human savagery. Four hours of unbearable, harrowing archive footage and photographs that provide irrefutable evidence of the Nazis' crimes.

Several film cameras placed in the shadows record each infinitesimal reaction that flits across the faces of the accused. Some faces express denial; others, embarrassment or shame. One man attempts to hide belated tears behind thick black glasses. His name was Hans Frank. As Governor-General of Poland, he was responsible for the deaths of almost three million Polish Jews. Returning to the place where his father was tried, 75 years on, his son, Niklas Frank, has difficulty finding words to speak about his father's



crimes. Hans Frank was found guilty of participating in war crimes and of crimes against humanity and was sentenced to death at Nuremberg.

For everyone present in the courtroom that day - judges, prosecutors, defence counsels and of course the accused - the screening of the film was a crucial moment. For the Schulberg brothers, it was the culmination of their endeavours. In the course of their frenetic three-month investigation, they had succeeded in collecting hundreds of hours of footage, mostly filmed by the Nazis themselves and carefully stored in top-secret stashes.

The documentary proposes to mark the 75-year anniversary of the ground-breaking Nuremberg Trials, which served as a model for international criminal law and set the standard for the filming of all subsequent trials of major historical significance, by telling the fascinating story.

Flash-back...

Their father was the Paramount studio chief B. P. Schulberg. Budd, the elder brother, began his Hollywood career as a screenwriter. Stuart was more interested in the production side (his production credits were to include films by the great Nicholas Ray).

The USA entered the war in December 1941. The two brothers enlisted in the Navy, but were approached by men from the OSS Field Photographic Branch, the US forces' film unit, which was headed by none other than John Ford.

Shortly after the Allies' victory, Ford assigned Budd and Stuart Schulberg to gather archive footage and photographic records of the Nazis' crimes to bolster the evidence against Hitler's regime.

They embarked on an intense three-month investigation that took them all over a Europe in ruins and landed them in some extraordinary situations. Certain incidents seem like something straight out of a spy thriller, as when Budd learned the existence of a large secret stash of Nazi archive footage from one of his informers - a former SS film editor who had worked on Goebbels' film unit, only to find out that there was a hitch. The stash was located in the part of Germany that was under Soviet control and could only be entered with the Red Army's permission. A meeting was scheduled between Budd and a Soviet officer called Major Georgi Avenarius. To start with, Avenarius was not at all keen on the idea of US soldiers venturing into the territory he was in charge of, but once negotiations began, the vodka flowed

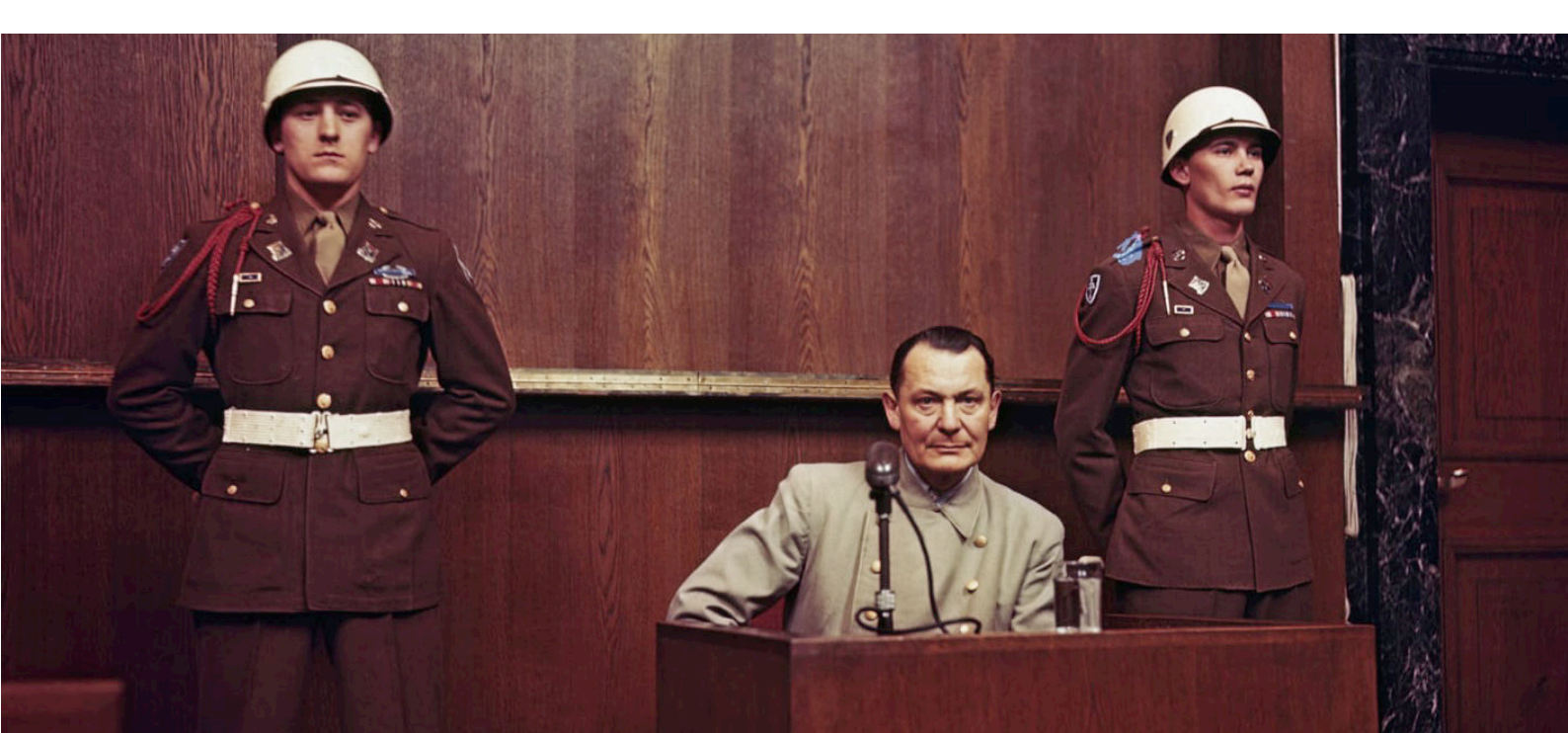
freely, and when Budd mentioned in passing that John Ford was his superior, the Major's face lit up: he was a fervent admirer of Ford's films. After that, there was no problem: Budd and his men were allowed into the Soviet zone.

But they were too late. When they reached the warehouse, it was in flames. Either the German informer had tipped off his associates, who had decided to destroy the archives, or the Soviets had seized them.

A few weeks earlier, Budd had travelled to Kitzbühel, in Austria, to arrest Leni Riefenstahl. His instructions were to force her to watch the archive films they had collected to help identify certain high-ranking Nazi dignitaries.

The two gilded youths from Hollywood suddenly found themselves in the grown-up world of historic events, regularly travelling to the US army headquarters in Berlin for meetings with Robert Jackson, the United States Chief Prosecutor in overall charge of organizing the Nuremberg Trials. Jackson was a man with a vision who dedicated his life to justice: he was determined to use the best film-making skills Hollywood could provide to achieve his aims.

Hollywood and justice, cinema and history... The ethical, artistic, technical, historical and political issues raised both by the Schulberg brothers' editing of the archive footage for use as evidence against the Nazis and by the film of the actual trial are as relevant as ever.



Manhattan, USA. The present

It was Sandra Schulberg, Stuart Schulberg's daughter, who found the last traces of the film her father made of the first Nuremberg trial. She came upon the old film reels almost by chance while clearing the family apartment after her parents died. From that almost accidental discovery to the painstaking political and historical research Sandra Schulberg conducted to recreate the original film, the story of the film's restoration is fascinating in itself.

When Sandra compared the trial footage with contemporary recordings of the proceedings on vinyl discs, she realized that a lot was missing. She found out that the crews initially assigned to film the whole of the trial hearings had been put to work on other tasks that were deemed more urgent, so that in the event, only about 50 hours of trial hearings were filmed. Yet Stuart Schulberg and his team of Hollywood professionals edited the footage so skilfully that the finished film gives the impression of being exhaustive. This prompts us to explore the issues of artificial staging and historical objectivity in greater depth.

Stuttgart, 1 November 1948. The world premiere of the movie

The last months of editing were made very difficult by the political tensions surrounding the potential impact of the film, within the US authorities as well as between the Allies, particularly America and the Soviet Union.

Stuart had to juggle with sometimes contradictory instructions. The War Department in Washington seemed to share Jackson's position, aspiring to give the world a great film aimed at future generations, while the US command in Berlin favoured limited release, with showings restricted to Germany in the context of its denazification policy.

Stuart had an initial victory. He succeeded in getting the film premiered in Stuttgart on 1 November 1948. Its world premiere had originally been scheduled to take place in Berlin, but the venue had to be changed when Soviet forces suddenly blockaded the German

capital, putting an end to the fragile concord between the former Allies.

US and German newspaper articles about the release of the film make interesting reading. Many articles stress the animosities between the former Allies, but the newspapers also describe the reactions of the German public to the film: a mixture of denial, anger and shame.

The political tensions during the final stages of editing caused delays, and the film was pipped at the post. A Soviet film of the trial was shown in New York a few months before the Stuttgart premiere. The Soviet Union had beaten the USA by a head, sparking many a sardonic remark in the American press - especially as Stuart Schulberg's film was still awaiting its US release, initially scheduled for 1947. With hindsight, the episode recalls the Space Race the two superpowers were to engage in a few years later. The US authorities continued to be deliberately vague about their intentions. Eventually, the Schulbergs read in the press that the film they had staked so much on would not be released. They never received an official explanation.

The Washington Post journalist John Norris put forward a plausible explanation. He concluded an investigative report that had been highly tortuous to write (none of his sources would go on record) by saying that some people had suggested that "[T]here are those in authority in the United States who feel that Americans are so simple that they can hate only one enemy at a time. Forget the Nazis, they advise, and concentrate on the Reds."

In reality, the US authorities needed to "sell" the Marshall Plan for reconstruction in Europe - including Germany - to public opinion and were loath to remind people of the full extent of the Nazis' crimes. The Schulberg brothers' film had to go by the wayside.

For anyone who has studied this instructive episode, it was an utter betrayal, and one that lends the original title of Budd and Stuart Schulberg's film - Nuremberg: Its Lesson for Today - a new and more complex meaning.

arte DISTRIBUTION

CÉLINE PAYOT-LEHMANN

Head of International Distribution
Italy & USA
c-payot-lehmann@arteFrance.fr

AUDREY KAMGA

Sales Manager
Territories: Canada, Ireland, MENA region, Portugal, South America,
Spain & UK
Worldwide Inflight
a-kamga@arteFrance.fr

FRANKA SCHWABE

Sales Manager
Territories: Austria, Belgium, France, Germany,
Scandinavia, Iceland, Switzerland, Netherlands
f-schwabe@arteFrance.fr

LYDIA KALI

Sales Manager
Territories: Asia, Greece Oceania, Africa,
Language versions
l-kali@arteFrance.fr

ZOÉ TURPIN

Sales Manager
Territories: Eastern Europe, Israel, Russia,
Worldwide Non-Theatrical Rights
z-turpin@arteFrance.fr

WHITNEY MARIN

Sales Assistant
w-marin@arteFrance.fr