Nuremberg Film

The Nuremberg Film was a documentary pertaining to the Nuremberg trials after the fall of Nazi Party at the end of World War II. The Nuremberg trials were a set of trials held to prosecute Nazi war criminals. They took place throughout 1945 to 1949 [1]. It was also during this time period that the United States instituted the Marshall Plan which was “intended to rebuild the economies and spirits of Western Europe, primarily”. The plan was to the restore political stability largely through the revitalization of national economies. The US believed that political stability in Western Europe as a key to stopping the advances of communism in that region. [2].

According to McElwain [3], the film as it was released in Europe was “basically…a horror picture with little grasp of the purposes of the trials.” The US Department of State may have decided not to release this pre-edited version of the film “Nuremberg” due to the social outcries that may occur because of the graphic nature of the picture. The fear that resided within the United States government may have been that if the citizens of the United States of America were to see this film, then they would have been strongly opposed to the reconstruction of the “new” western Germany. The consequences of the American peoples view on Germany would have resulted in a complete economic collapse due to the lack of support in the reconstruction of Germany. Directly after World War II the post war economy of the United States was in poor condition. With Germany’s vital role within the global economy essentially hanging in the balance, depending on the production of a film, the United States government could not afford to take any risks that could cause catastrophic damage to their own economy.

If the true Nuremberg film were to be released today we believe that many key lessons could be obtained and be used to their utmost ability. One of these vital lessons is how the people of Germany were affected during that particular time of hardship. This would create a new mindset and apathy for the citizens of Germany. A main point that would be articulated by this film would be that not all citizens of Germany were Nazis and war criminals. Also, it would cause an understanding of their drastic political status change. During Hitler’s reign they were ruled under a tyrannical dictatorship. Post-war they were introduced to a new federal republic form of government.

Numerous sources are available pertaining to the Nuremberg film. Of the sources provided to us we found the declassified government letter to Mr. Kellerman most reliable. We found the correspondence from the Society of the Prevention of World War III least reliable. The Society had their own agenda, making them biased, and letters appear contradictory.

In conclusion, the Nuremberg film would have benefited many countries, especially those not included in the frontline. It would have provided a portrayal of the vicious reality known as World War II. The reasoning behind our government’s decision to withhold the film was logical, especially considering the circumstances, but we believe that in the long run it would have posed more good than bad.

[1] Linder, Doug, The Nuremberg Trials, 2000, <http://law2.umkc.edu/faculty/projects/ftrials/nuremberg/nurembergACCOUNT.html>

[2] The George C. Marshall Foundation, <http://www.marshallfoundation.org/TheMarshallPlan.htm>

[3] McElwain, Edwin, Letter to Department of State dated November 28, 1949.