

NEWS

Press Contact:
Online:

Karin Kolb – 262-3627 – kfkolb@wisc.edu
<http://cinema.wisc.edu> / <http://daadcenter.wisc.edu/events>

SELLING DEMOCRACY SERIES AT THE CINEMATHEQUE AND THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY AUDITORIUM HIGHLIGHTS FILMS OF THE MARSHALL PLAN: 1948–1953

FILMS PRODUCED TO “WIN THE PEACE” AFTER WORLD WAR II WERE BANNED IN U.S.

“As we look at U.S. democratization campaigns around the world today, I believe we have much to learn from the films of the Marshall Plan.” —Sandra Schulberg, Director, *Selling Democracy Project*



Former U. S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall
© Schulberg Productions, Inc., 2005

Madison, October 2, 2007 —From October 13-17, the Cinematheque and the Center for German & European Studies*, UW Madison, present **Selling Democracy: Films of the Marshall Plan, 1948–1953**. The four-part series brings to Madison 21 rare films that showcase the European recovery plan instigated by U.S. Secretary of State George C. Marshall after WWII. Each program is followed by a Q&A with Sandra Schulberg, who selected the films with Ed Carter, Documentary Curator of the Academy Film Archive of the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences. These films were banned in the United States under the terms of the 1948 Smith-Mundt Act that sought to prevent Americans from being propagandized. The ban was lifted in 1990, thanks to an amendment to the Foreign Relations Authorization Act. The **Selling Democracy** series is the first major effort to show the Marshall Plan films in public cinemas since it became legal to do so. The Madison showcase is part of an ongoing North American tour.

After World War II, the European Recovery Program (ERP), commonly known as the Marshall Plan, was put into motion as part of a campaign to “win the peace.” Marshall realized that Europe desperately needed help to rebuild its war-torn economies. What made his approach unique and visionary was the cooperative, multi-lateral nature of his proposal. As he stated in his now-famous 1947 speech: *“It would be neither fitting nor efficacious for this Government to undertake to draw up unilaterally a program designed to place Europe on its feet economically. That is the business of the Europeans....The program should be a joint one, agreed to by a number, if not all European nations.”* Seventeen nations signed on, and the U.S. ultimately voted \$13 billion – nearly \$100 billion in today’s dollars – to bolster their economies. What almost no one remembers is that the Europeans matched the U.S. investment through the creation of Marshall Plan counterpart

funds, cooperating with each other for the first time, and laying the groundwork for the European Common Market. Cooperation became the watchword of the Marshall Plan, permitting whole societies to lay down their weapons, transcend the bitterness of war, and work towards European union.

Film played a crucial role in the Marshall Plan information campaign. Made by European filmmakers for European audiences and paid for by the European counterpart funds, they were shown as shorts in the movie theaters, and widely distributed on portable 16mm projection equipment. Made in a variety of styles, the Marshall Plan films are distinguished by their intelligence and wit. The filmmakers found artful ways to engage audiences who had become inured to Nazi and Allied propaganda. The films also challenged audiences to become active citizens, to grapple with the competing Western and Soviet ideologies on offer, and to make conscious choices about what kind of postwar society they wanted to build.

Though close to 300 Marshall Plan films were made, all were buried and forgotten over time. Now brought to light by the *Selling Democracy Project*, they offer startling and relevant insights into the challenges faced by the United States and Europe today in many parts of the world. Postwar conflict resolution, rehabilitation of civil society, infrastructure creation, the search for diplomatic rather than military solutions, the use of media to encourage diverse points of view and encourage positive social change -- all these issues were faced by our "greatest generation" after WWII and are reflected back to us in the films of the Marshall Plan.



Stuart Schulberg
Photo courtesy the Schulberg family

Sandra Schulberg, creator of the Selling Democracy Project, is a distinguished film executive and producer, whose credits include the Oscar-nominated *Quills* (starring Geoffrey Rush and Kate Winslet), *Undisputed* (starring Wesley Snipes and Ving Rhames), *Shadow Magic*, *Waiting for the Moon*, *Wildrose*, and *Northern Lights*, among others. For many years, she served as Senior Vice President of the prestigious PBS drama series, *American Playhouse*. She founded the Independent Feature Project (IFP), and co-founded First Run Features, in part to distribute *The War At Home*, Barry Brown and Glen Silber's documentary about Madison's response to the Vietnam War. Born in Paris, she is the daughter of Stuart Schulberg, chief of the Marshall Plan Motion Picture Section from 1950-1952. In addition to producing a new movie set in Romania, she is currently at work on a DVD collection of Marshall Plan films.

The North American tour of **Selling Democracy: Films of the Marshall Plan, 1948-1953** is made possible with support from the Academy Film Archive, which has restored and made special exhibition prints of more than 25 Marshall Plan films and with funding from the George C. Marshall Foundation, the German Marshall Fund of the United States, the Goethe-Institut. The Madison showcase is funded by the Center for German & European Studies of the University of Wisconsin and the UW Cinematheque.

Programs will take place at the **Cinematheque**, 4070 Vilas Hall (Parliamentary Room), 821 University Avenue and the **Historical Society Auditorium**, 816 State Street. Admission is free, seating is limited.

In addition to the film screenings, there will be a panel discussion on Monday, October 15, 3:30 p.m., at the Pyle Center, featuring Professor Marc Silberman (German Department, UW Madison), Professor Rudy Koshar (History Department, UW Madison), Professor Jennifer Fay (Film Studies, Michigan State University) and Sandra Schulberg (curator of the *Selling Democracy* series).

**SELLING DEMOCRACY:
FILMS OF THE MARSHALL PLAN, 1948–1953**

Screening Schedule -- October 13-17, 2007



Still from *Hunger*, produced for OMGUS by K-S Film, 1948

Saturday, October 13, 7:30 p.m.

Cinematheque

Program 1

Introduced by Sandra Schulberg; Q&A after the screening.

Program 1 sets the stage for the Marshall Plan films by showing the devastation in Germany and rest of Europe after the war. It begins with several de-Nazification/re-education films made by the OMGUS (Office of Military Government/US) documentary unit. In *Hunger* (Beta Sp, 7 minutes), Europe's postwar misery is blamed on Germany. German audiences protested the film, so the OMGUS brass pulled it from theaters, and the film unit changed its tactics. Divided Berlin quickly became a locus for propaganda battles with the Soviets, as seen in *Between East and West* (16mm, 22 minutes). *The Bridge* (16mm, 15 minutes) documents the dramatic rescue of West Berlin by the airlift. *Me and Mr. Marshall* (35mm, 13 minutes), the first Marshall Plan film, celebrates Germany's acceptance into the Marshall Plan, which was eased by the sympathy aroused by the Berlin Blockade. When it seemed the elder generation would never change, the Marshall Planners aimed at the young. *Hansl and the 200,000 Chicks* (35mm, 15 minutes) is one of the most charming examples. *Houen Zo* (35mm, 21 minutes) depicts the rebuilding of Rotterdam, which the Nazis bombed to rubble. The filmmaker used the sounds of the city instead of narration to create visual symphony. A tour de force, this film won a special prize at the 1952 Cannes Film Festival.



Still from *Hansl and the 200,000 Chicks*, directed by Georg Tressler, 1952

Sunday, October 14, 4:00 p.m.

Cinematheque

Program 2

Introduced by Sandra Schulberg; Q&A after the screening.

Initially the Marshall Plan focused entirely on Europe's economic recovery, but after the invasion of Korea (in June 1950) concerns about the spread of Communism shifted some of the focus to "mutual security" and rearmament. Yet, the Motion Picture Section continued to commission such charming and popular films such as *The Story of Koula* (16mm, 21 minutes), about a small Greek boy trying to tame a giant American mule. This film also illustrates how the Europeans mediated and shaped the Marshall Plan to fit their own needs -- talking back to the Americans in the process.

The rest of Program 2 showcases some of the most entertaining and pointed examples of anti-Communist films created under the aegis of the Marshall Plan



Still from *Aquila*, starring Natale Peretti, 1950

Motion Picture Section, and sets up the dialogue between the Marshall Plan and the Comintern. These titles are all fictionalized, dramatic or animated works. *Aquila* (35mm, 21 minutes) is a striking example of (omit: early) Italian neo-realism, and, like *Houen Zo*, tells its story without the use of narration. *The Smiths and the Robinsons* (Beta Sp, 19 minutes) a comedy about the slight gradations in the British class system, doubles as a recruiting film for the British Home Guard. *Do Not Disturb!* (Beta Sp, 15 minutes) is pure satire: in the guise of a Soviet-inspired propaganda film, it makes fun of West Germany and the U.S., but the evils of consumerism appear ever so tempting. *Without Fear* (Beta SP, 15 minutes), a remarkable piece of color animation, eloquently evokes the spectre of totalitarianism without ever mentioning the word “Communist.”

Monday, October 15, 3:30 p.m.

The Pyle Center

Panel Discussion

Selling Democracy: Films of the Marshall Plan, 1948-1953

Panelists: Professor **Marc Silberman** (German Department, UW Madison), Professor **Rudy Koshar** (History Department, UW Madison), Professor **Jennifer Fay** (Film Studies, Michigan State University) and **Sandra Schulberg** (Project Director for Selling Democracy)

Tuesday, October 16, 7:30 p.m.

Historical Society Auditorium

Program 3

Introduced by Sandra Schulberg; Q&A after the screening.

By 1949 the Marshall Plan Motion Picture Section was in full swing, and its filmmakers were challenged to turn people’s despair into optimism. The films in Program 3 embody the can-do spirit of the Marshall Planners before anti-Communist anxieties set in. From the American point of view, productivity was the key to prosperity, but it had to be tempered with a respect for traditional European craftsmanship. These themes are amusingly tackled in *The Extraordinary Adventures of a Quart of Milk* (16mm, 14 minutes), *The Home We Love* (16mm, 15 minutes), and *Rice and Bulls* (16mm, 15 minutes), all set in France. Thrilling struggles to reclaim land and find water for irrigation are recounted in *Island of Faith* (16mm, 20 minutes) and *Town Without Water* (16mm, 13 minutes). *ERP in Action No. 5* (16mm, 14 minutes) takes you on a tour of aid projects in Portugal, Great Britain, Belgium, and Greece— all set to the jaunty tunes typical of 50’s newsreels.

Wednesday, October 17, 7:30 p.m.

Historical Society Auditorium

Program 4

Introduced by Sandra Schulberg; Q&A after the screening.



Still from *The Shoemaker and the Hatter*, produced by John Halas and Joy Batchelor Ltd, London, 1952

The invasion of Korea cut short the optimistic first phase of the Marshall Plan. During phase two, under the Mutual Security Agency, filmmakers would make more films with anti-Communist themes, stressing the virtues of political unity and military strength. At an alpine resort where families gather from all over Europe, it's the children who overcome the Babel of languages in *Let's Be Childish* (35mm, 20 minutes), a delightful ode to the future of Europe. *Whitsun Holiday* (16mm, 14 minutes) is a clever piece of propaganda that mocks the way Eastern Bloc citizens spend their leisure time. The Marshall Plan blazed the trail towards European Union, out of a conviction that a European market was the fastest route to recovery and the best bulwark against Communism. But trade barriers were a major obstacle. Here animation came to the rescue. Economics is fun and easy to swallow in *The Shoemaker and the Hatter* (16mm, 16 minutes), a cartoon parable about the virtues of a common market. Taken together, these films posit a vision of a united Europe, pre-figuring the Common Market and European Union, and demonstrating the extraordinary long-term legacy of the Marshall Plan and its impact on the Europe of today. Most deal with the importance of dropping the national barriers and promoting a united Europe, but a united Europe in which national differences are respected. *The Promise of Barty O'Brien* with its 50 minutes is one of the two long-form films made for the Marshall Plan that utilized professional actors. Because it beautifully dramatizes the European-American partnership, focuses on the conflict between the generations (a recurring theme of the Marshall Plan films) and concludes so touchingly by heralding the new, it is the perfect last film for this four-part series. .

*The film series leads up to the 10th Anniversary Conference of the Center for German & European Studies (October 19-20, 2007). For more information please visit <http://daadcenter.wisc.edu/>

For public information, call 608.262.3627, or visit cinema.wisc.edu.