RECONSIDERING 'TRIUMPH OF THE WILL'  

WAS HITLER THERE?  

BRIAN WINSTON

‘On September 5 1934
20 years
after the outbreak of
the World War
16 years
after the start of
German suffering
19 months
after the beginning of
Germany’s rebirth
Adolf Hitler flew
to Nuremberg
to review the columns
of his faithful followers.’

Opening Titles
Triumph des Willens
(Triumph of the Will)

It is only in the selection of speeches
and incidents that Riefenstahl reveals a
real skill. She is at least the equal of
current American political image-makers,
for Triumph of the Will contains
an orchestrated defence of Hitler’s
actions after the Röhm Putch
which could hardly have been organised as such
by anybody other than a fully conscious
political animal.

As to the film’s effectiveness as propa-
ganda, it was not widely used in Germany
at the time, being creak and boring and
too obviously about Hitler’s difficulties
with the SA. It is probably fair to say that
every fascist convert to the film has
made (and there do not, of course,
include Riefenstahl’s cinéaste admirers
who, to a man, maintain their ability to
resist her message), there must be many
more who have learned from the film
something of the central rottenness of
the world Hitler and his party created,
especially when it was re-edited by the
enemies of Nazidom and used against
them. This is a strange accolade to be
found in the literature on a masterpiece
of film propaganda, ‘the most success-
fully, most purely propagandist film
ever made’.

Above all, perhaps, Riefenstahl’s
manipulation of material, a manipulation
one finds surprising given the resources
at her command, stretches the limits of
editing (and, to a lesser extent, recon-
structive) praxis to a point where it
becomes permissible to ask—if one knew
no better—Was Hitler really there?’

Riefenstahl’s preferences also. Given our
taste for the spectacle of the disorgan-
ised mass (that part of fascist aesthetics
which we all share), shots of 200,000
men in close formation become impressive
not through the fact of filming, but because
of the mass itself. Riefenstahl is as
impressive as the next film-maker when
she has that sort of spectacle to work
with; but Triumph of the Will, with its
tours of medieval Nuremberg, its folk
parades and boy scout horsemanship, its
endless drives and dull speeches, is not
for the most part that. All in all, what
characterises the 107 minutes of film is a
typically fascist gigantism, a lack of pro-
portion, a failure to know when to stop.
Covering an event with more than one camera is, as any director charged with such a task will tell you, a co-operative effort. However well briefed and instructed, the camera operators must be largely left to their own devices. On Triumph of the Will Riefenstahl had a minimum of forty-nine cameramen, many from the newreel studios. She dressed in SA uniforms and wandered at will. But of nineteen of them, sixteen cinematographers from the mainstream of the industry. To give Riefenstahl credit for what they photographed is to stretch the definition of co-operating to breaking point. One of her Olympic film crew, Henry Jaworski, attested in an interview (Film Culture, 1973) that she had a good grasp of technicalities. This is not surprising, given the years she had spent as an actress and director and the co-operative nature of location work on her early mountain films. But his description of her behaviour, which presumably also applies to Triumph of the Will, is a more instructive picture of the film director as logistics supervisor: 'She would rush around from one cameraman to the other like a maniac shouting—how are you doing? how about this and this? screamed and yelling, oh she was an absolute maniac, she was wild.' How then did her cameramen do? The amount of material which is either out of focus or reframed in mid-shot suggests that they did not do as well as is normally suggested by the critical acclaim the film has received. Of course, the aerials of the marching columns, the general view of the City of Tents, the arrival of the battle standards in the Luitpold Hall and the Ceremony of the Fallen are impressive, because such massiveness impresses itself automatically on us. But even in these sequences not all the operation is good. At other points in the film the spray gun technique of the newreel men is more apparent in shots which grab and track from little to less. There is also the occasional rack to centre frame the object of the shot. One can only agree with one of Riefenstahl's leading apologists, Richard Meran Barsam: The achievements of Riefenstahl's large crew are unimpressive.

This is not true of shot composition, as there is almost no moment even in the most prosaic of shots when the aesthetic principles of the Greeks are not being obeyed. But before crediting Riefenstahl with this it would be as well to remember the overall aesthetic atmosphere that was being created around the party, which is documented in Art in the Third Reich.

*The number claimed varies. Richard Meran Barsam in Filmguide to Triumph of the Will (Indiana University Press, 1973) gives in one place 19 cameramen, 19 assistants, plus one serial and an unnumbered group from the newreelers. Elsewhere he adds 36 cameramen and assistants, 9 serial photographers, 17 newreelers and 12 newreelers (from Tobis for sound). Riefenstahl has given 16 cameramen using thirty cameras (not impossible, since assistants would normally be given the opportunity to use second camera). I have taken the named cameramen from the credits. In Barsam, plus Riefenstahl's number of newreel men (29), plus one (not 9) serial photographer to give a total of 49. Clearly more cameras could have been at work. It does not matter much except that the confusion is typical.
by Berthold Hinz. As aesthetic practitioners, her cameramen could have been expected, even without her explicit instruction, to frame deliberately left or right or, above all, to look constantly upwards, not just at the Führer but at the entire cast of characters including bit players and extras, especially if those extras are in uniform.

One of the central problems of fascism, as both Hinz and Susan Sontag have pointed out, is that its aesthetics offer no discontinuity in the aesthetic development of our culture. Fascist aesthetics are a product of Western aesthetics. This is why the Riefenstahl industry can be so enamoured of the form of Triumph of the Will while desperately trying to disavow its content. That cannot be done; and consideration of the low angle, the most prevalent compositional technique in the film, neatly illustrates why not.

The original technique of low angle viewpoint 'was used in the Renaissance in drawing classical statuary. Since these statues were usually mounted on pedestals it was inevitable that they were seen from below. The Renaissance worship of the sublime added to this naturalistic effect' (Berthold Hinz). The viewpoint places the observer level with the feet of the statue. This, as Hinz has pointed out, is a reflection of fascist reality in the sense that a kick in the face is a constant threat. Thus a pre-fascist artistic convention, with specific connotations, is taken up by the fascists and those connotations are thereby extended. The result is not an automatic revulsion in the non-fascist viewer; on the contrary, the shared aesthetic effectively co-opts the viewer. Inevitably, given our aesthetic history, the low angle dominates Triumph of the Will.

It is not an inconsistency that I can both deny Riefenstahl's real responsibility for the camerawork yet claim that the film reflects her ownness with fascist aesthetics, for this has been demonstrated by Susan Sontag in her documentary on Riefenstahl's preoccupation with such iconography and themes continues unabated into the 70s. (In 1973, in an interview with the New York Review of Books, Riefenstahl said that she had always been interested in documenting the organisation of the Rally. She leaves the beauty of the city and the formal surface of ceremony and meeting to concentrate on such things as musculation, the way people stand on each other's backs and racing, like the charioteers in Ben-Hur. This is not without significance. The rage expressed by the Riefenstahl industry that there is a near inadmissable relationship between Leni Riefenstahl and Nazism would be, in the light of these choices, absurd were it not so distasteful.)

This tumbling film structure also contains further evidence of the limitations of the film. The camera pans resolutely away from some wrestling action to frame a line of tents. Obviously the crew then spotted the wrestling and repositioned to film it, using reflectors crudely to light the boys. This crudeness is of a piece with the other lighting in the film. It is claimed that Riefenstahl was pioneering a number of location lighting techniques; the results of these experiments are bravely included in the final cut. But throwing a searchlight across part of a crowd is simple, ineffectual and ultimately not very adventurous. Those night shots of the band outside Hitler's hotel are for the most part just well enough exposed for one to see the badness of the post-syncing, and it should be said no worse than its time. Inside the Luitpold Hall a better job was done— but that auditorium can be considered as a studio, and one which had been available for planning for at least seven months.

More astonishing, in view of the sixty-one hours of material, is the fact that there are a few out of focus shots in the film and that these are of the Führer. In other words, not one of all her cameras could give Riefenstahl a good shot of Hitler at a couple of crucial moments. The most crucial is when the plane lands in the first sequence. The shot begins with two out of focus Luftwaffen stewards running for the door; Hitler steps out and the camera does not focus up until Goebbels steps out after him. It is not until five shots after his first appearance that we see him in focus. Riefenstahl has never disputed Siegfried Kracauer's reading of the significance of her opening shot: that it is a god descending. The whole thing would fall apart if Hitler is at the end of it all discovered already on the ground. Hence, soft shots.

Apart from being forced to use out of focus shots, Riefenstahl was also required to reshoot some other material. This is revealed by Albert Speer in his memoirs, Inside the Third Reich. The introductory speech of Hess and the statements of Rosenberg, Frank and Streicher were filmed, he says, later in Berlin. Speer claims, with that self-serving naivety all surviving Nazis seem to adopt, that he was upset by Hess' ability to duplicate on the duplicate set in Berlin, in the absence of the Führer, exactly the same passion he had called up in Nuremberg. But, he says, "Frau Riefenstahl on the other hand thought the acted scenes better than the original presentation."

For Riefenstahl this revelation was a blow, because she has always claimed that despite the fact she is a great artist she did nothing more at Nuremberg than film the event. 'Not a single scene is staged. Everything is genuine. . . . It is history, pure hist at stake here.' If Riefenstahl indeed decades dutifully nature of her cow denied Speer ad was confirmed. To which film started to claim filmed Streicher, or because of a of or in film Stürmer, the more the Nazi leaders considered in so him it was beca racial purity was business at the 6t unlikely that Sh Streicher was GI Francanson, in with he was credited by during the making the provision of More than that, her co-writer and Light, her first revised in 1932, aid. The man in the Balalaika. He Riefenstahl fact that none 4 locutors ever close. There are two sh not mesh together ranks of men be the lectern was at the background and the lectern hall. This speech sym, sync from. In fact there are on the background s in this sec mentioned by reshut in Berlin background as tw Four have cown, and of mentioned by Sp is probably safe four who share ground lighting by Speer are in
Horseplay in the tent 'city of soldiers and workers'.

the rest it must be an open question, Riefenstahl's protests notwithstanding.

Since the filming was neither effective nor totally 'actual', Riefenstahl's skill as an editor becomes a main plank of the Riefenstahl industry's platform. Let us turn to that claim, beginning with the structure of the film as a whole.

At 107 minutes, given the limited subject matter, the film is inordinately long and crushingly repetitive, marching column-marching-marches, meetings and congresses and commemorations. Riefenstahl offers an account of her restructuring of the chronology of the congress which suggests she was simply concerned with creating 'hills and valleys'. Her notion of what these might be is attenuated. Take the great march past, described even by Barss as 'lengthy'. It lasts eighteen minutes and four seconds. But it is preceded by a sequence - the Ceremony of the Fallen - which lasts eleven minutes and seventeen seconds, well over half of which is taken up with marching about; and it is followed by the closing sequence of the film in the Luitpold Hall, which begins with the lengthy marching in of the war banners (and concludes with Hitler's Fifth Speech of the film). Her notion of a valley includes one over ten minutes across in which a nicely shot tour of Nuremberg in the early morning is followed by the goings-on in East City and concludes with badly cut coverage of men, women and children in folk costume progressing, some of them eventually being presented to Hitler.

The film's reputation as a work of immense power depends - it seems to me, crucially depends - on those public domain prints which are of little more than an hour's duration. The shorter (sixty-minute) cut, concentrating as it does on the more effective big scenes, is an infinitely better made film than Riefenstahl's. But that is not Riefenstahl's film. Her work reveals a failure of film-making judgment (a failure, in part, repeated in her next two documentaries Fest der Volkes and Fest der Schönen Künste) as well as in love with her own material as the average film student. Thus it was that Triumph of the Will was far too long to serve any useful purpose, except to influence those already committed to Nazism. And in 1934/35 there was a pressing reason why such a film might be needed.

The structure of the film is obviously crude to contain formality and (comparative) informality, night and day, march and speech, to have 'hills and valleys'. But that is not the prime organizing requirement. Neither is the theme that Hitler has come from the sky to kindle ancient Nuremberg with the primal Teutonic fire, to liberate the energy and spirit of the German people. (Ken Kelman, Film Culture, 1973). This sort of statement of the obvious does not explain why the film is the way it is and why what is said, is said. These questions can only be answered by looking closely at the actual political message of the film in its time. The Rally was held seventy days after the Röhm Putsch. The film was cut and released as the purge of Left men continued throughout 1933/34. For Riefenstahl to maintain her status as an 'artist', it is necessary for her constantly to claim that she had no idea about the internal situation of the party. (Although what Herbert Seehofer, the name credited on the film as party propaganda consultant, talked to her about must thereby remain unclear.) She says in interviews, 'I have not one moment thought of Röhm,' and 'I told Hitler that I don't know what is S and what is SS.' It is important to establish what terms Riefenstahl claims she agreed to, for the making of the film. 'Nobody of the party, including Goebbels, including Hitler, has seen one metre.' She was allowed to shoot, edit and premiere the picture with no interference. 'Course that the film was registered with the censorship apparatus before public screening. She claims in her interviews her complete independence of the party, taking her at her word, the careful and coherent political structure of the film becomes a puzzle. It is of course possible for her to have arrived at this political structure by accident.

The first line propaganda importance of the 8th Annual Party Congress and, therefore, of Triumph of the Will remains in the account both the event and the film offer of the aftermath of the Röhm Putsch. A contemporary American diarist quoted in Hinton's The Films of Leni Riefenstahl describes the scene at the ceremony for the Fallen the day after the film's première: 'I faced his sa stormtroopers in the bloody puge... There was considerable tension in the stadium and I noticed that Hitler's own bodyguard was drawn up in front of film separating him from the mass of brownshirts.'

'A poet among hacks' - Richard Meran Barss

out of desired this is smears, utory parts of were Speer... all but the replicates in the same umberg, on the scenes action.' It was a proclaimed last artist among than scene is... It is well bud-
Hitler did not rise to the occasion: 'Men of the SA and the SS. A few months ago, a black shadow spread over the movement. Neither, the SA, nor any other institution of the party, has anything to do with this shadow... And if one admits the spirit of the SA, this will not break the SA but only those who dare to sin against them. Only a lunatic or a deliberate liar could think that I, or anybody, should ever dissorve what we ourselves have built up over many long years.' The eyewitness reports that the SA seemed uninwarded. Riefenstahl herself along with her poor performance of the big lie in action by emphasising the dazzling spectacle of the setting. One must of course sympathise with Hitler's rhetorical problem on this occasion. Even as he spoke thousands of lower level SA cadres were being dismissed from the party and some arrested. Between two and four hundred had already been killed.

Yet Riefenstahl knew nothing of this. That Hitler is seen in the film more in brown shirt SA uniform than any other is a fact of history. The moment to begin the speeches in the Congress— for nobody was ordering her—with Wagner reading Hitler's proclamation that 'no revolution could last for ever without leading to total anarchy' was an accident.

It was a political accident and purely artistic that every speaker in the film but three and Hitler on each occasion that he speaks in the second part of the film was the guest from the left posed by the SA. Rosenberg speaks of today's 'special youth' (the SA was dominated by 20-year-olds as well as schoolteachers and civil servants) who are 'tempestuously charging forward' and who 'will one day be called upon to continue the efforts begun in the stormy years of the 1918 Munich revolution.' (My italics.) 'One day' the social revolution then implied will continue— but not now. The speeches of Todt, the chief autobahn engineer, Reinhardt, head of the speech training school of the party, and Darre, the agriculture minister, and Hierl of the Reich Labour Service all emphasise the progress that has been made in reviving work. Ley, the leader of the Reich Labour Front, sums up his thoughts along these lines: 'One thought alone must dominate all our work: to make the German worker an upstanding proud citizen enjoying equal rights with the rest of the nation.'

This social trust dominates Riefenstahl's selection to the point where other topics on the party agenda are almost forgotten. Apart from this sequence of speakers, only on one occasion do we see a gathering being presented without Hitler. Look: one of the least effective of Nazi speakers, the man who had succeeded Röhm, is heard to utter these (immoral?) words: 'Comrades, many of you are here tonight know me from these first years of our movement when I marched with you in your rank and file as an SA man. I am as much of an SA man now as I was; the men know only one thing: fidelity to and fighting for the Führer.'

Neither the import of the message nor the quality of the shots suggest any help for the inclusion of this sequence. We have no Riefenstahl's denial, we could perhaps understand it. In the last speech of the film, Hitler returns to the task: 'In the past our adversaries, through supression and persecution, have cleaned the party from time to time of the rubbish that began to appear. Today we must do the mustering out and discarding of what have proven to be bad...'

Riefensthal's first defence to this case that the film has an obvious and dominant political line is to claim she knew nothing because she was out of Germany over the summer of 1934— as if radio and newspapers were yet to be invented. 'I was at this time in Spain... look, in the whole film as Hitler is speaking to the SA he mentions in one moment the Röhm affair... Hitler mentions this because it was coming out of this and he mentions this. But I have not thought to make this... it is only separate. Even Hitler has spoken only a very few words about this.' (Film Culture interview, 1973.)

The film, as we have seen, is structured around Hitler's immediate need to connect the numerically powerful but leaderless SA. In so far as the SA were contained and in so far as Triumph of the Will operated in that containment, thus far it was successful as propaganda. Let Riefenstahl know nothing of Röhm. It is but a small matter compared to other things she also claims no knowledge of. I want to be linked with concentration camps. I have never seen them. I had nothing to do with them.

Normative editing rules are a contract, as it were, between film-maker and audience as to the nature and quality of the reality on offer. Yet, with forty-nine or more cameras, Riefenstahl breezed every pan to pan, she reverses action (crosses the line), she jump cuts sync. action. But most significant of all is the fact that all those cameras yield a scant half-dozen matched cuts in the entire film (and most of these are false—in the blanket-toosing sequence). The matched cut is, in a multi-camera shoot at least, a sort of guarantee on the contract integrity of the editor. Lest those of us who claim Riefenstahl uses the cutaway to cutaway style of Ruttman's Berlin: die Symphonie einer Großstadt: a style invented not so that the normative rule of consecutive editing would be suspended but rather that they might be by-passed when the footage was non-repetitive 'actuality'.

The cutaway to cutaway technique destroys the possibility of the viewer reading off the relationship of any shot to any other shot except where an obvious interruption takes place. The result is that 'the concrete reality of Nuremberg becomes tenuous', as even the Riefenstahl industry has noticed. Of course one knows that, at ninety feet a minute, on portable cameras long takes were then difficult. Also one also knows that all film editing requires rearrangement and abridgment. What Riefenstahl does is to carry on that process with such disregard for the maintenance of continuity of time and place that she reaches an extreme.

Take the opening of the film: Hitler's plane—a plane we never see Hitler in—descends from a cloudy sky and at the same time casts a sharp edged shadow on the ground below, a meteorological situation not often encountered. All normal readings of the narrative suggest that the shadowed columns are marching to meet the plane. They never get there. The crowd at the airfield is not at the airfield: this crowd is shown standing on walls as if on a terrace. There are no walls or trees at the airfield, as is revealed in the wide shot of the establishing shots of the plane. This shot is itself a little strange, since it shows a crowd, oddly thin (about six files of thirty people in each), standing before the equally oddly deserted plane. Then the 'actual' shot of the plane surrounded by officials and cars. But the plane itself is a little strange, for it appears to have quite different markings on either side of its tail. I suggest that narrative suggests Riefenstahl was totally wrong-footed at the airport (the only focus shot of Hitler comes here and is a further indication); and that on the evidence of the film the airfield was restaged with a small crowd of extras and the sequence constructed with material shot elsewhere.

Riefenstahl then drives into Nuremberg. He does this in a Mercedes with a magic windscreens, whereas in some shots is up and in others laid flat on the bonnet. In fact this drive is constructed from two drives, the second (with the windscreen down) being used later in the film as well. In a Congress in windscreen, is up to drive up. All helbed or 'm' later on in the c the airfield c there must be drive or drive. During the quite differs he exits. Ob have been the camera a establishing these close-c surround), I suggest the 800 to the mounted out cameras.

This consta always hung line, is a cons parade, such leaders st the Hitler is now using one has no id parades there stahl can do measure not, can see her d the limited 800 to as lit. fit in. That night an are not cros achieved and records them same pace— 800 to mile an hour.

Given that era d single shots is actually (especially i soundtrack bands, laug why not?) at Heil's whim Nuremberg in the Ceren rally and the Hall do we numbers of are average that it could him. This as little lies (Far from rifenstahl) at. It reflects 1934, inst pass Peter's propaganda Triumph is pletely mutilated (Ken Kel in all this mately be the near fictionised into queer veracity of sources, cut...
that all 14 dozen or most of the witnesses testifying were Hitler's hair, which is untidy and combed in different close-up shots. Also those shots in which he is balded or 'marked' with light seem to be later in the film. After his arrival at the airfield or the hotel would allow, so there must be a possibility that another drive or vehicles is involved in the cutting. During the drive he enters a tunnel of quite different proportions from the one he exits. Close-ups at the hotel could not have been taken as he arrived because the camera needed for them is not in the establishing shot. The prefiguring these close-ups in which Hitler is seen surrounded by officials is not sufficient to suggest the use of an ultra-long (say 200mm) lens which could have been mounted out of the range of the other cameras.

This construction of action, with cutaways hung out on it like washing on a line, is a commonplace of cutaway. In the final picture, are the changes among the leaders standing behind the Mercedes Hitler is using as a reviewing stand, that one has no idea from the film how many people were on the stand. That Riefenstahl can do this with the material is a measure not of her editing skill, for one can see her doing it quite plainly, but of the limited variety of coverage she had. Bits from one scene can, more or less, fit into any other scene, save only that night and day, interior and exterior are not cross-cut. That a certain rhythm is achieved cause it is accurate, as they record, they, all took place at about the same pace—a medium march or a twenty mile an hour car ride.

Given that Hitler, the figure who literally dominates, does so mainly in single shots or small tight group shots, it is actually possible for the viewer to ask (especially in the light of the added soundtrack) whether Riefenstahl's Hitler is the real one. Only in the night and day for this youth, related the final entry into the Luftfahrt Hall do we see Hitler with substantial numbers of people. Elsewhere the crowds are average to thin or he is so far away that it could be an extra impersonating him. This absurdity result is what all the little lies of the editing finally add up to. Far from being 'purely historical', Riefenstahl states that her film is irrefutable. It reflects the truth that was then, in 1934, history; far from coming to surpass Potemkin as the ultimate cinema propaganda...for one essential reason: Winsorist is a true documentary, complete made-up of 'actual' footage—the ultimate in incontrovertible credibility' (Ken Kelman, Film Culture, 1973).

Triumph is a true documentary, complete made-up of 'actual' footage—the ultimate in incontrovertible credibility' (Ken Kelman, Film Culture, 1973). From this, Triumph of the Will ultimately was not as convincing, achieving the near impasse. So disoriented, so fictionalised, is the editing that it calls into question quite often material the veracity of which is secured by other sources, others witnesses.

Goebbels was not satisfied with having 52 per cent of the nation and terrorising the other 48 per cent. We want the people as the people, not only passively but actively. The way to do this was, in part, to seize control of the means of media production, but not over-producing. We compromised on production. 'We National Socialists do not place any particular value on our SA marching across the stage or screen... The National Socialist government has never asked that SA films should be made. On the contrary—it sees in a danger of surplus'. Thus Goebbels in 1933 (quoted in Film Propaganda, by Richard Taylor). Hitler, however, was not so sure.

Goebbels favoured the 'independence' of ideologically safe film-makers. Through the Reichsfilmkammer the industry had been purged of Jewish and other alien elements. It was safe to leave the remainder 'free'. This system applied not only to film-makers. 'Artists were not necessarily politically committed—to the National socialism would later cite this point to exonerate themselves' (Berthold Hinse). Which

'The film genius lives within you and you have raised the cinema up to the heights where it usually does not ascend'—Jean Cocteau

is exactly what Riefenstahl has done. So determined was Goebbels to leave a simulacrum of 'independence' that even the newswheel companies, the regime's major visual propaganda medium, were taken over via a front organisation and only openly nationalised in 1940. Riefenstahl has been embarrassed by the title on the release print of Triumph of the Will from UFA that the producer of the film was the party's own film section. She claims it is a lie, and cites the independent nature of her Olympic film production company to prove the independence of this earlier work. But the reality of Triumph of the Will under National Socialism is a fiction. It really does not matter who commissioned, produced or financed the film. One way or another the Nazis ran the German film industry.

All of Riefenstahl's 'spiel falls into place. Of course it was Hitler who asked her to make the film, since Goebbels, the apostle of indirect propaganda, would not be against it. There is then the supposed hostility Goebbels had for her. There is no evidence of animosity beyond the occasional remark about the Nazis' and a real belief that she was doing counter-productive work. In the event, Goebbels was right. The film was not well received. She claims that one of her demands from Hitler was that she never be asked to do a film for the Government again. Why would they want another? Hitler had disagreed with Goebbels, but Triumph of the Will had made Goebbels' point. Goebbels was certainly friendly enough to give the film the 1935 National Film Prize; she denies it to a tribunal in 1947. And as late as 1972 she is still denying that she ever received official from the Nazis. 'I don't want to have any kind of official honour because I need my time... I want to be 100 per cent independent.'

After Triumph of the Will, the main thrust of the Nazi propaganda machine in the area of actuality film was to exploit the audience's naive trust and belief in the newswheel; the most profound of all the credibility of film nowhere more touchingly and lingeringly exhibited than by the Riefenstahl industry. The paintings of German fascism no longer reflected reality but presented it in such a way that it paralysed consciousness,' says Berthold Hinse. No more paralysed collection of consciousness can be found than those which have for twenty years or so assiduously devoted themselves to Riefenstahl. I can sympathise with those smitten by the charming persona of this still beautiful actress, with her lisp and little voice creating a little world of political woman in their thirties, a dancer film star and film director in the Weimar Republic, but rather the innocent, uncritical viewer who more sees to see Mr Hitler but she took her mother and father. But, without any caveat or saving plea to art, to deal with this film is unavoidably to deal with the Nazis. Art has nothing to do with it. It is the Third Reich that was evasive, in that it made no reference whatever to what we regard as the salient features of the regime, and it was corrigible, that it aloof, but that least wanted to be told. As to the true nature of the times, it tells us nothing. As to the true nature of art, it tells us even less. This stands for Triumph of the Will. It is trains, sycophants, mendacious and masochistic. It works only because of Speer's spectacle.

The West has too much enjoyed, not to say luxuriated in this dehumanised machine—the Trooping of the Colour, the Trooping of the Colour, the service of revolutionaries before the Winter Palace, the race for the Cimarron Strip. It has paid a price for a song of the price we paid to the fascists. For too long has Riefenstahl traded on critics' amnesia and their addiction to spectacle. Hers was no ancient hoppo, no Monument Valley harmlessly to fascinate the film-maker. The parades of such fantasies, the pornography of such a notion of human perfection, cost millions of dead. To be asked to forget them for any work of art is preposterous. To be asked to forget them for this piece of frantic yet turgidly crude technique is particularly unacceptable.
Hitler was loyal to his early followers, rewarding them with positions of power - even if they may have lacked the abilities to manage those responsibilities. i.e Rudolf Hess, Hermann Goering, Heinrich Himmler. He was also completely loyal to Mussolini after Mussolini did not oppose the Nazi takeover of Austria in 1938. Adolf Hitler was clear about his political ideas and made the clear right from day of his political career. He did not make any false promises to his citizen. Whatever he said, he promised he tried to get for his country. Hitler was not a military strategist, which probably explains why he so fanatically enforced his absurd no retreat, fight to the last man policy to ridiculous ends. Then again, you don't have to be a military strategist to realize that sheer willpower won't do much good when stacked up against a freaking howitzer, so maybe he was just insane. And we're only half-kidding about that "Hitler was living in a fantasy world. Before Hitler There Was. Updated on April 4, 2019. Alexander James Guckenberger. Fortier goes so far as to claim that Gobineau was one of the forerunners of Hitler (Fortier 343). Stephen Jay Gould summarizes Gobineau's philosophical position; the fate of civilizations is largely determined by race (Gould). Furthermore, Gobineau was a notable proponent of Nordic supremacy (Joseph Arthur Gobineau, Comte De 1). Conclusion.