

## Leni Riefenstahl with the 14th Army Corps in Poland (September 1939)

### Abstract

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On September 10, 1939, shortly after the invasion of Poland, Leni Riefenstahl (1902-2003) was at the Polish front, where, at Hitler's behest, she began filming a documentary on the Polish campaign. This photograph shows her with members of the 14th Army Corps. In addition to her film reporter's uniform, Riefenstahl wears one of the pistols with which she had personally outfitted her crew, "Special Film Troop Riefenstahl" [*Sonderfilmtrupp Riefenstahl*]. Her stay on the Polish front only became publicly known at the end of the 1940s, with the discovery of photographs that showed her standing by as Wehrmacht soldiers massacred the Jewish population of the Polish town of Konskie on September 12, 1939. Nineteen Polish Jews were killed and many others severely injured. Riefenstahl always denied having had any knowledge of this war crime, but her denial is contradicted by the existence of a photograph bearing the inscription: "Leni Riefenstahl faints upon seeing the dead Jews." Throughout her whole life, Riefenstahl maintained that she was never an ardent supporter of National Socialism. She explained her stay in Poland by claiming that she had wanted to make herself useful as a war correspondent. But her propaganda films, the proximity of her "fascist aesthetics" to Nazi racial doctrine, and her documentation of the invasion of Poland make her attempts to present herself as an apolitical artist seem highly implausible.

### Source

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Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-2004-0022  
Foto: Burmeister, Oswald | September 1939

Source: Leni Riefenstahl with the 14th Army Corps in Radom, Poland, September 1939.

Photographer: Oswald Burmeister. Bundesarchiv, Bild 146-2004-0022. See also the copy on Wikimedia Commons,

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[ch\\_von\\_Leni\\_Riefenstahl.jpg](#)

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