

Triumph of the Will (1935)

Abstract

Perhaps the most famous Nazi propaganda film, *Triumph of the Will* has been the source of much discussion since its premiere in 1935. Director Leni Riefenstahl set out to “document” the annual Nazi party rally in September 1934 with a keen eye and with the advanced technology to capture wide pans and close-up shots from below while the camera moved along a track. Despite the director’s insistence until her death at age 101 that she was not a propagandist, the film was commissioned and supported by the Propaganda Ministry and stands as a centerpiece of Nazi propaganda. By capturing (and also staging) parts of this spectacle, Riefenstahl’s film conveyed both the choreographed and spontaneous nature of mass support. The most noted scenes are shown here, in the image of Hitler descending like a god from the skies, young “Aryans” enjoying their adventure in Nuremberg, and the noted absence of weapons (replaced by spades, indicating the regime’s success in putting Germans back to work). Finally, the Führer’s speech gave the public a chance to see Hitler in a heroic stance, presiding over a now proud nation.

Source

/Hail! Hail! Hail!

[Music]

/Hail! Hail! Heil!

/We want to see our Führer!

[Drums, fanfare]

[Marching music; singing]

[Drums]

/Here we stand. We are ready. And carry Germany into the new era. Germany! Comrade, where are you from? From Frisia. And you, comrade? From Bavaria. And you? From the Kaiserstuhl. And you? From Pomerania. And from Königsberg. From Silesia. From the coast. From the Black Forest. From Dresden. From the Danube. From the Rhine. And from the Saar.

/One people, one leader, one empire! Germany!

/Today together at work. In the moor. And we in the quarry. And we in the sand. We build dikes on the North Sea - to spite the storm tides! We plant trees - sweeping forests! We build roads - from village to village, from town to town. We create new fields for the farmers - fields and forests, fields and bread - for Germany!

[Fanfare]

/We are the men of the peasantry,

/faithful to the homeland, to the hearth

/Clear the field and plow the land

/And put the seed into the earth.

/We build the house on solid ground

/And make anew the old covenant,

/The covenant between man and earth.

We were not in the trenches and not in the barrage of shells, and yet we are soldiers! With our hammers, axes, shovels, picks, spades. We are the young troops of the Reich!

As once at Langemarck. At Tannenberg, before Liège, before Verdun, on the Somme, on the Düna, in Flanders.

/In the west, in the east, in the south.

/On land, on water and in the clouds.

/Comrades shot by the Red Front and the reaction: you are not dead! You are alive. In Germany!

/A year ago we met for the first time on this field. The first general roll call of the political leaders of the National Socialist Party. 200,000 men are now gathered, whom nothing has called here but the commandment of their hearts, whom nothing has called here but the commandment of their loyalty.

[Cheers.]

/It was the great need of our people that once seized us. And which brought us together, wrestled in battle and made us great. Therefore all those cannot understand who have not suffered the same hardship among their people.

[Cheers.]

/To them it seems puzzling and mysterious what brings these hundreds of thousands together, what makes them endure hardship, suffering, privation. They cannot think of it in any other way than through a state order. You are wrong! It is not the state that commands us, but we command the state!

[Cheers.]

It is not the state that created us, but we create our state!

[Cheers.]

Because the movement, it lives. And it stands rock solidly founded. And as long as even one of us can breathe, he will lend his strength to this movement and stand up for it, as in the years that lie behind us. Then the drum will be joined by the drum, the flag by the flag, the troop by the troop, the Gau by the Gau, and then at last this mighty column, the united nation, will follow the formerly disunited people.

[Cheers.]

/It would be a sacrilege if we ever let fall what had to be fought for and won with so much work, so many worries, so many sacrifices and so much hardship.

[Cheers.]

/You cannot be unfaithful to that which has given content, meaning and purpose to a whole life. It does not become such a thing from nothing if this becoming is not based on a great command. And the command was not given to us by an earthly superior, it was given to us by the God who created our people.

[Cheers.]

So let our vow be this evening, in every hour, every day, to think only of Germany, of our people and Reich, of our German nation.

Our German people: Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil! Sieg Heil!

Source: *Triumph des Willens*, 1934. Propaganda film, b/w, dir. Leni Riefenstahl. Bundesarchiv Filmarchiv 33272-1.

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