Leni Riefenstahl
- Actress & pin-up girl
- “Mountain films” = Bavarian hillbillies
- Made short film Victory of Faith for 1933 Nazi Party Rally
- Hitler (& Goebbels) tried to persuade her to do film for 1934 rally --- she suggested Walter Ruttman, but agreed

Riefenstahl (age 32) had total control, everything at her disposal:
Staff of 120 -->
  30 cameras & sound trucks
  22 camera cars & drivers
  16 leading cameramen & other well-known technicians
Triumph of the Will

- Incredible camera placement: ramps, towers, elevators, etc.
- Neither Hitler nor Goebbels could see film before finished
- Shown in 1935 --- Results: probably the most famous propaganda film ever made

Techniques:

- 1. No spoken commentary --- speeches by Hitler & others but no narration
- 2. Point-of-view shots
- 3. Creating adulation through cross-cutting & shot/reverse shots
- 4. Camera angles (low / high)

Techniques:

- 5. Soundtrack -- cheering crowds and very “German” music.
- 6. Endless Nazi icons & symbols
Questions

- Riefenstahl hated by many people. Was she a Nazi?
- Protests at Telluride (CO) film festival in 1983.

Triumph of the Will

- Propaganda film or documentary?
- To what extent is Riefenstahl responsible for the content?
- How truthful or accurate is her presentation?

Olympia Part I & II

- Made for the 1936 Olympics
- Now feuding with Goebbels
- Films tend to focus on beauty, movement of human body
- Did show Jessie Owens winning medals ..... but not Hitler leaving stadium in anger
In Britain the Grierson G.P.O. film unit becomes the Crown Film Unit

Important directors:
Humphrey Jennings & Harry Watt

Important films: Listen to Britain (42); Fires Were Started (43); Target for Tonight (41)

In Germany:
War newsreels
Fritz Hippler -- Campaign in Poland (40); Victory in the West (41); The Eternal Jew (40)
Combining “fiction” clips & non-fiction --- heavy, hateful narration

In U.S.:
The War Dept. turned to Hollywood for filmmaking help
Wanted films to explain reasons for U.S. involvement -- why we were fighting
Enter Frank Capra
Frank Capra

- No background in documentary. Claims never to have seen one before the war.
- Known for his very pro-American feature films: Mr. Smith Goes to Washington, Meet John Doe, Mr. Deeds Goes to Town.
- Films about freedom, the power of the common man & democracy.

Why We Fight Series

- Seven diff. films in series -- about why we were fighting and what we were fighting for... (hence WHY WE FIGHT title) Intended for military inductees only.
- Almost compilation films -- war newsreels, Disney animation, even Hollywood films.

Techniques

- Strange blending of information, education & propaganda.
- Heavy music, reliance on narration to shape what we see in the images (often supplied by German or Japanese films).
More Hollywood “Buglers”

- William Wyler - *Memphis Belle*
- John Ford - *Battle of Midway*
- John Huston made 3 wartime documentaries:
  - *Report from the Aleutians, Let There Be Light & The Battle of San Pietro* (44)

Battle of San Pietro

- Held up for year by authorities
- Considered too pacifistic --- using voices of dead solidiers recorded earlier in film....
- Finally use a General who comes on a beginning of film to “soften” the impact