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| Triumph of the Will (1935) |
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| *Triumph des Willens* [*Triumph of the Will*] is a black and white propaganda film made by German filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl. The film documents the 1934 Nazi Party Congress in Nuremberg, including speeches by Adolf Hitler, Rudolf Hess, Joseph Goebbels, and other Nazi leaders. The film eschews the newsreel-style documentary realism popular at the time, and instead relies on innovations in cinematography, editing, and music to communicate Hitler as the saviour of the German people. Betraying a modernist fascination with visual spectacle, Riefenstahl documented the pageantry of the occasion from manifold angles, and pioneered the use of mounted moving cameras. In order to emphasise Hitler’s dominance, Riefenstahl repeatedly shot him from a low angle, making him appear to tower above the vast crowds attending the rally who appear small and compressed through the use of long focus telephoto lenses. Rhythmic editing intercutting historic German architecture with Nazi party symbols works to present the party as the natural fulfilment of Germany’s mythic past. This aim is also achieved through Herbert Windt’s score, which combines Wagnerian symphonies with folk songs, military marches, and Nazi hymns. Derided for its message, yet praised for its technical brilliance, *Triumph of the Will* remains extremely polarising among critics. |
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| Further reading:  (Hinton)  (Rother)  (Sontag)  (Welch)  (Zox-Weaver) |