Leni Riefenstahl & German propaganda
Historical & political context

1933 - Franklin D. Roosevelt, candidate of Democratic party
      Adolf Hitler, leader of the Nationalist Socialist party,
      win elections & comes to power

In documentary ---- Governments sponsor
      Grierson – UK
      Lorentz – US
      Riefenstahl – Germany

1936 --- *Night Mail*
      *The Plow that Broke the Plains*
      *Triumph of the Will*
Leni Riefenstahl

Born Berlin 1902 – died 2003

Film director & photographer
Dancer & actress in German nature films
Starred in the mystical *The Blue Light* (1932)

Directed *Triumph of the Will* 1935 for Hitler
Propaganda documentary
  glorifying the 1934 party rally in Nurnberg

Directed *Olympia* 1938
  Documentary on the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin
  praised for its technical brilliance
Detained by Allied forces after WWII
Cleared of complicity in Nazi crimes

Became a photographer

*The Last of the Nuba* (1974)
*The People of Kau* (1976)
*Vanishing Africa* (1982)

Film career never recovered
THE LAST OF THE NUBA
Triumph of the Will  1935

Made to commemorate the first party rally after Nazis in power
Goal – show the German people
the power of a resurgent Germany
united under the National Socialism

Rally carefully staged as a religious ritual
creating mass emotion --- overcoming individual reason

Molds crowds into artistic patterns  - stationary & moving
the ‘self’ is lost in the ‘mass’
Olympia  1938

Edited from enormous amount of footage
Huge public event --- the Olympic Games of 1936 in Berlin

Much more subtle than *Triumph of the Will*
   articulates Nazi ideology in cinematic terms

Noted for its technical & esthetic achievements
   - tracking shots to follow athlete’s movements (camera on rails)
   - slow motion shots

Influence on modern sports photography
Works on Leni Riefenstahl


• Biographies:

Leni Riefensthal, *A memoir* (German, 1987; English, 1993)
