

'Sieg im Westen' (1941): interservice and bureaucratic propaganda rivalries in Nazi Germany

COOPER C. GRAHAM, *Library of Congress*

Sieg im Westen (Victory in the West) (SiW), the official German army film covering its campaigns in Belgium, Holland and France in May and June of 1940, is well-known by reputation. Not many, however, have actually seen the entire film, and aside from Siegfried Kracauer, who analyzed parts of it several times, no one has written about it [1].

When Kracauer first mentioned the film in *Propaganda and the Nazi War Film*, he found it different in several respects from other propaganda films, such as *Baptism of Fire*. Later, in *From Caligari to Hitler*, he revised his view, terming the film a typical Nazi production, no different from *Feuertaufe* (Baptism of Fire) or *Feldzug in Polen* (Campaign in Poland) [2]. He was primarily interested in showing how all German propaganda films distorted reality, in contrast (according to Kracauer) to Russian documentaries such as *The Mannerheim Line*, or British ones such as *Target for Tonight*. Much of what he says about the style of SiW is true, but his arguments tend to be weakened by the inescapable conclusion that the Allies used many of the same devices in such later documentary films as Roy Boulting's *Desert Victory*, Capra's *Divide and Conquer* or Yuri Reisman's *Berlin*. Kracauer did notice that in SiW, the army dominated over the party, but he felt that this was a carefully orchestrated effect, and was in accordance with Hitler's aims. His view fit in very well with the widely-accepted war-time notion that German propaganda was monolithic and orchestrated down to the last detail by Dr Goebbels's omnipotent Propaganda Ministry.

The production history of SiW challenges this notion, because, quite aside from its artistic merits or defaults, it is a gauge of the infighting among the army, the Luftwaffe and the Propaganda Ministry, which the material at the National Archives in Washington and Dr Goebbels's diary describe in some detail. The history of the production of the film further illustrates what H. M. Trevor-Roper stated: that Nazi Germany was a satrapy rather than an efficient totalitarian organization. There is often a tension between conflicting institutions in making a film, and this tension can result in a better end product. In SiW, the conflicting viewpoints were never synthesized, with the result that the film is divided into two ungainly sections, neither one having much to do with the other in content or style: the first the product of the Propaganda Ministry and the second, the German army.

In order to appreciate the bitterness of the struggle surrounding the film, some historical background is important. Early in 1938, Generals Werner von Blomberg and Werner Freiherr von Fritsch were dismissed from leadership of the army, and Adolf

press chief of the army [5]. Most people who came into contact with Hesse seem to have had fond memories of him, although former Reich Film Intendant Fritz Hippler remembered him as a "dreamy pundit" [6]. He was a career officer, and had commanded a platoon as a subaltern in the trenches in World War I. His eyesight was very bad, and it was perhaps because of this that between the wars he lectured on military history at the Infantry School in Potsdam. He seems to have had a natural bent as a scholar and writer in any case. He wrote numerous books as well as articles on military history during his time at Potsdam, and also made friends with Erwin Rommel there [7].

Hesse's duties as press chief of the army and as the new head of OKW/W Pr V were extensive and went far beyond the production of SiW. But it was one of his most important assignments, and in order to insure first-class footage for it, by March of 1940 he had established a Special Reporting Unit on Special Assignment with its headquarters at Bad Godesberg [8]. In command was Captain Freiherr von Medem, and included in the staff were First Lieutenant von Werder, Captain Professor Erich Welter, the former editor of the *Frankfurter Zeitung*, and First Lieutenant Deunert. This special unit would be primarily responsible for making the film on the western campaign, using four specially assigned film units. In addition, much use was expected to be made of the film units of the *Heeresfilmstelle* (Army Film Center). And, in accordance with the directive of von Brauchitsch of 16 December 1939, Hesse and von Medem established a chain of command whereby the Propaganda Companies' film units, by direct order of Hasso von Wedel, Chief of the Propaganda Staff of the Armed Forces High Command, sent the appropriate footage directly to WPr V and bypassed Goebbels's Propaganda Ministry [9].

This last step was a particularly dangerous one. The propaganda companies had already often been a bone of contention between the Propaganda Ministry and the armed forces. The Propaganda Company men were in uniform, subject to military discipline, and subject to all the pressures that being part of a military unit entails. However, the footage that the film people shot was the responsibility of the Propaganda Ministry. Dr Goebbels and von Brauchitsch had already wrangled several times about their respective spheres of authority. Now, as the separate branches felt more and more inclined to make their own propaganda, the temptation to hold back good footage was becoming more difficult to resist. The Propaganda Ministry was sure to see that it was being short-changed.

On 10 May 1940, the Germans attacked in the West. Like everyone else, Hesse's staff appears to have been surprised by the speed of the German advance. But it is clear that whatever happened in the battle, Hesse was not going to lose in the propaganda struggle against the Luftwaffe. Just how jealously Hesse guarded his best footage as well as his deep suspicion of the Luftwaffe can be gauged from his comments to Hasso von Wedel made on 11 May 1940. First he repeated that certain footage was to be held back from the newsreels, and then he wanted to know why there had been so little coverage of the army in the day's reports while the Luftwaffe received so much. Von Wedel soothed him by telling him that the probable cause was that the Luftwaffe was simply in a position to get its film delivered faster than the army, although this answer may not have made Hesse feel much better [10].

The High Command complained several times during the course of the first few weeks of fighting about the quality of footage that it was receiving [11]. It may be that Captain von Medem, the Chief of the Special Reporting Unit, was simply continuing to send his best footage to the Propaganda Ministry. In any case, at the beginning of

The sequence where this device is used shows a rubber boat filled with sappers crossing the Albert Canal under enemy fire, followed by a long shot of the fort taken with a telephoto lens, as a single man jumps onto the turret on the top of the fort and affixes a shaped charge. There is then a longer shot of the same fort as it is shaken by a massive explosion. It is the most dramatic moment in the film, but it is partly re-enacted. Hesse had gotten hold of the storm detachment, headed by a Sergeant Mikosch, who had exploded the fortress originally. Ertl took the shot as Sergeant Portsteffen re-enacted his feat of a few weeks before of jumping onto the armored turret and lighting the charge. The subsequent shot of the exploding fort was actual [17]. In the midst of the filming at Eben Emael, Hesse awarded the Iron Cross to Allgeier and Ertl for their outstanding film work on the Western Front.

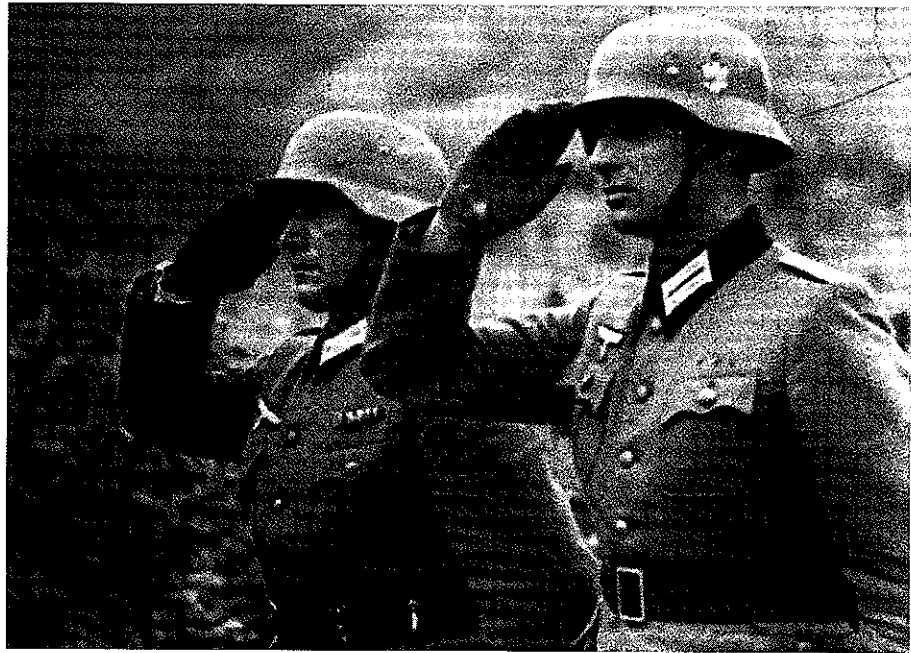


FIG. 3. Propaganda Troops Sepp Allgeier (Left) and Hans Ertl interrupt their filming at Eben Emael to receive the Iron Cross. This shot is from German Newsreel DW 519, 34/40. Courtesy Transit-Film. Frame enlargement by Patrick Loughney.

In August, Ertl was assigned to Rommel's Seventh Panzer Division. The armored battles at Amiens and Abbeville had not received sufficient film coverage, so Rommel re-enacted these battles, as well as the crossing of the Somme with his tanks. Another famous shot from the film, the massed tank formations preparing to open the second phase of the western offensive, is also a re-creation [18].

Other and far more controversial footage was re-created. On 23 May 1940, Rolf Kratzer, assistant chief of Wehrmacht Propaganda, had sent the following telegram to the propaganda companies on the western front: "All Propaganda companies are to look for opportunities for shots comparing good-looking German soldiers with especially brutish Senegal Negroes and other colored prisoners. A sharp racial contrast is important. Shipment of material urgent." [19]. A lot of this material would appear in the newsreels. Rommel shot re-creations of black troops surrendering at the Somme in

Propaganda Ministry rather than von Brauchitsch, and also in it is the first mention of a prolog to the film, to be made by the Propaganda Ministry [24]. Hesse does not comment on this, but it was clearly felt by the Propaganda Ministry that the film placed insufficient emphasis on the political background for the war.

The film was marked for further editing as well as scoring by Herbert Windt, and Hesse asked that plans for the film's premiere be delayed until March 1941 [25]. Nevertheless, by December, Hesse felt the film was ready for release. Goebbels did not agree, and wrote in his diary on 20 December 1940:

... The rough cut of the new Armed Forces film about the campaign in the west is finished. Hesse wants to release it right away. I still apply the brakes. Hesse is too rash, and he is the same way in his propaganda for Brauchitsch, which does more harm than good. [26]

On 21 December 1940, the film was again shown to Hitler and Dr Goebbels. According to Hesse, a demand was made by the Propaganda Ministry that the film be set aside and that several changes be made. The army personnel insisted on its point of view. On 22 December 1940, Dr Goebbels wrote in his diary:

In the evening we [Hitler and Goebbels] check the Armed Forces film on the campaign in the west. It has not turned out quite satisfactory. No grand thrust. Also the collaboration between the various service branches is insufficiently emphasized. I am against its present release. The Führer agrees. [27]

According to Ertl, the film was finally ready in the middle of January 1941. To put a stop to any further delays, Hasso von Wedel decided to show the film to Hitler as well as to the other persons who were most responsible for the film [28]. Ertl described the scene as follows:

A few minutes before the special showing of the film in a projection room of the Reich Chancellery of January 20, 1941, we (that is, Lieutenant Colonel Hesse, First Lieutenant Welter, Svend Noldan, Sepp Allgeier, Heinz Kluth and I) were introduced to the Führer by Colonel von Wedel. Hitler greeted each of us very warmly with a handshake and asked us where we were from and what particular tasks we had accomplished in connection with the film. He talked with Sepp Allgeier more freely as he already knew him from the Nuremberg films as a member of Leni Riefenstahl's team... A few comfortable chairs were placed in the natural wood and red brick projection room, which was built like a staircase. We sat—Hitler in the middle—in the first row. Behind us sat SS guards. In front of us, SS orderlies lounged on the chairless steps. Hitler was visibly impressed by the film. He especially favorably, even enthusiastically observed those scenes that showed everyday experiences in various locales which reminded him of his own time as a soldier in the First World War. [29]

Ertl later wrote that Hitler was visibly moved by the film. Goebbels wrote in his diary on 22 January 1941: "Yesterday morning early with Brauchitsch saw the new Army film *Sieg im Westen*. Now it is quite usable. Still a few little alterations needed" [30]. The way was clear for its immediate release.

The premiere of the film took place on 31 January 1941 at the Ufa Palast am Zoo, bedecked with Iron Crosses and war flags, and was attended by von Brauchitsch and many army officers as well as Dr Goebbels. Other army and party notables were present, but conspicuously absent were Adolf Hitler and Hermann Goering. Goebbels

are accompanied by the song *We're Going to Hang out our Washing on the Siegfried Line*, suggesting obvious ridicule.

The Germans have to deal with a heavily fortified Belgian and Dutch river and canal system, comprised of a strong system of forts, tank traps and other defense works. The strongest is Fortress Eben Emael at Liège, and many believe it incapable of capture. It has 22 reinforced concrete defense works, 40 guns, is protected by a deep canal and manned by 1200 men. The film uses the attack on the outer bunker number 4 of the fortress as the central focus of the German attack, and shows (with Ertl's reconstruction) how one unit of pioneer troops destroyed the bunker with a shaped charge. The way is then free into Holland, and the other defensive lines are quickly broken. After five days, Holland capitulates.



FIG. 4. A soldier giving orders during the attack on the fortified points around Liège. This closeup is a good example of the orders given to the German cameramen to show the types of men doing the fighting, especially the young officers. Courtesy Transit-Film. Frame enlargement by Patrick Loughney.

This part of the film must have made Marshal Goering very angry. One of the main reasons for the German success in Belgium and Holland was the dropping of paratroopers and airborne soldiers at Eben Emael as well as at key bridges at Moerdijk and Rotterdam in The Netherlands so the German drive would not be halted. But the Luftwaffe's role is shown in an extremely sketchy fashion in SiW.

(3) *Tank Battle*. At Namur in southwest Belgium, a tank battle is shown, with the Germans the decisive victors. The film makes quite a point of showing the damage to the huge, ungainly French tank known as the Char 3c. Some of the shots were made from within a tank actually in the battle.

(4) *Breakthrough at Sedan*. Many people believe this to be the crucial step in the German victory. The Germans had come up with an extremely bold plan in which the main attack would not be on the right wing of the German forces through Belgium and

forces in Belgium try to break through the German line, and make a determined attack at Arras, but in vain. The Germans begin to cut off and surround the French and English forces, and the Belgians surrender. The British Expeditionary Force begins its exodus back to Britain from Dunkirk. Comments such as "Betrayed by the English, the King of Belgium offers the surrender of his army" and "The English heedlessly destroy the land of their brothers-in-arms" sound like they originated with the Propaganda Ministry, although there is no proof that they did so. On the fourth of June, Dunkirk falls. The film makes extremely good use of captured British footage at Arras and Dunkirk. As the camera pans over the British prisoners, we hear *We're Going to Hang out our Washing on the Siegfried Line* played instrumentally like a dirge, in a minor key.

(5) *Interlude*. The preparations for an attack south, against France are made. Here the film shows the establishment of a new north-south supply line, the establishment of a new reinforcement center in Northern France, the tremendous task of re-supplying the whole army, the rebuilding of destroyed railroads and bridges, etc. There are also shots in Germany of new German armies being called up, and of German war industries working at full tilt.

This section is followed by a series of idyllic shots of German soldiers at play and rest, accompanied by Windt's song *Hundert Mann und Lieselotte* [33]. This section would seem to fill Hesse's requirement that the film show the 'merry moments' of the campaign as well as the fighting. German soldiers enter a French cathedral, and one plays Bach. This is followed by shots of a Romantic-picturesque German village, with women doing laundry by hand, etc. This mood ends as a loudspeaker announces the main attack south against France, and the crossing of the Somme and Aisne Canal.

(6) *Attack on the Weygand Line and the Attack on France*. The new French commanding General Weygand, replacing Gamelin, establishes a fortified defense system on the Somme River on the west, and the Aisne River on the east, and on the Aisne-Oise canal. This line runs in an east-west direction and is called the Weygand Line. On 5 June, the Germans begin their attack on this line along a 400-mile front. Since the film cannot show everything, it concentrates on the fighting on the Somme at Hangest, south of Flixecourt where the battle is particularly sharp. The film shows heavy fighting within the city. Meanwhile an armored division manages to cross the Somme on a railroad bridge, and then begins the attack southwestward across open country toward Rouen and the lower Seine.

The film also shows an attack from the center of the line directed at the Chemin des Dames, the old World War I battlefield. Even with no artillery preparation, the Germans take the field by nightfall.

The film shows an advance from the left wing at the Aisne through Avançon and Reims, which advances to the Marne. Here Ertl's naked pioneer jumps into the Marne and pulls a rubber boat across. With the Marne crossed, there is no barrier between the Germans and Paris. Paris falls on 14 June.

After the fall of Paris, the campaign becomes a chase rather than a battle. German armies rush southeast and southwest to block the avenues of escape to Switzerland from Alsace-Lorraine, and to capture the remaining ports on the Atlantic. The film shows, with relish, the taking of Verdun by the Germans, but there is little military value in its capture at this point.

(7) *Attack on the Rhine and the Maginot Line*. This attack featured von Leeb's Army Group C, which had been sitting on the frontier since the campaign started. Clearly, the war was over, and there was little for Army Group C to do. They cross the

tanks, and above all, the Maginot Line. This comes as a shock to Americans, who usually consider the campaign today as one in which a pitifully unprepared Europe staggered into battle against a Germany that was supremely ready for this battle. The army section of the film is not free of other National Socialist ideology. As already stated, heavy emphasis is placed on the spurious allegation that the English and French had already violated Belgian neutrality, with the collusion of the Dutch and Belgians, before the Germans attacked these countries. There are also the shots of Senegalese troops, stressing their 'barbarousness' in contrast to the Germans.

As had been pointed out, there were problems with the construction of the film. Certainly, from every point of view, the most dramatic moment of the campaign was the breakout across the Meuse and the dash by German Panzer Divisions westward to the channel before the Allies could stop them. The film treats this, but only as one event among many others, effectively robbing it of both its dramatic and military importance. The film spends as much time showing Witzleben's attack across the upper Rhine at the end of the campaign, when it was for all practical purposes already over. This may partly be because Hesse was a professional soldier, and he did not wish to offend any generals by leaving them out. It may also be a holdover from Hesse's teaching style at Potsdam. Whatever the cause, the film's very thoroughness gives it a ponderous, pendantic feeling which is probably in part what disturbed Dr Goebbels about it.

Hitler may have been moved by the exploits of the German army described in the film, as Ertl wrote, but Ertl appears to have been wrong about Hitler's enthusiasm for the film. On 10 February 1941, Hitler issued the following decree:

WF St. No. 75/41g 2.10.41

The Führer and Commander of the Armed Forces

The effective direction of the propaganda war demands intense concentration and integrated leadership.

In this regard, I therefore direct the Armed Forces:

1. In questions of propaganda and military censorship, the representation of the Armed Forces as an entity, just as in questions involving separate units of the Armed Forces in relation to all civilian government bureaus, as well as publicity, is to be exclusively the task of the High Command of the Armed Forces.

2. The propaganda troops, with reference to organization, change of personnel, their employment, in general as well as with reference to specific assignments, are placed under the absolute command of the Armed Forces.

Adolf Hitler [34]

This directive, which was clearly promulgated with SiW in mind, was a direct rebuke to von Brauchitsch and to Hesse. Dr Goebbels was delighted, and wrote that the directive greatly eased his burdens [35]. It was now impossible for the army or any other service branches to direct their own propaganda. Whatever the faults of the film, such a direct slap in the face to the German Army directly after its remarkable achievement in Western Europe was unprecedented.

The insult to the army was all the more remarkable since the film was an immediate success in Germany. Probably, as Dr Goebbels had recognized, any film about the western campaign would have been a success there at this time. But there were excellent things about the film, in spite of its flaws. Noldan's animated maps were excellent, Windt's score was good, and sometimes first-rate. The film made wonderful

dismissal. Brauchitsch is holding on to him. I have Hesse barred from the press and radio. Now we will see what comes of it. In any case, I shall not give in. I am now handing all the material over to Goering for his information. [41]

Hesse's WPr V had really been doomed from the moment that Hitler had promulgated his directive of 10 February 1941. Brauchitsch visited with Dr Goebbels on 11 March 1941 to plead for Hesse, but Dr Goebbels told him that there was no possibility of Hesse keeping his old job. This conversation in itself indicates all too clearly the comparative positions of the Army High Command and the Propaganda Ministry. Finally, on 12 March, Dr Goebbels was able to write in his diary that Hesse had been sacked [42]. Before leaving, Hesse wrote a long report to Brauchitsch on the achievements of WPr V as well as outlining unfinished and future projects of the unit [43]. Most of these projects were quickly torpedoed by the Propaganda Ministry. Hesse went to Paris, where he spent the remainder of the war, and independent army production came to an end.

Nevertheless, SiW was put to a brilliant propaganda use probably never foreseen by von Brauchitsch or Dr Goebbels, and it is a use that needs extensive discussion by experts on film propaganda. SiW was deliberately held back from initial general distribution in neutral and friendly countries until it had been shown to selected audiences of political, military and business leaders as well as other prominent figures by the Military Attachés connected to the various German embassies. The Germans had done this before to a limited extent. Even though Leni Riefenstahl's *Olympia* never got general distribution in England before the war, von Ribbentrop used to show it to selected audiences at the German embassy. But this use of SiW was far more systematic and effective. It was shown widely in the Balkans, the Near East, Iran, South America and Japan. Even if the film was banned to the general public in these countries, the Military Attachés could still use the film highly effectively [44]. The Kremlin asked for a copy of it, much to the discomfort of the Germans, who were already planning Operation Barbarossa in the near future [45]. The film reached the United States in May 1941, where it was boycotted and the subject of a complaint to Secretary of State Hull about Nazi propaganda on American screens [46].

As previously stated, some of Dr Goebbels's criticisms of the film are well taken. But there were some very effective things about the film. The photography was marvellous, and the Allies would not equal the excellence of the combat footage for years to come. Noldan's animated maps were wonderful, and would be copied by Disney in the *Why We Fight* series. Windt's score is good. The film is also highly effective in its use of captured enemy footage for ironic effect, another lesson that Capra would remember in the *Why We Fight* series. What the film most needs is strong directorial talent, but in spite of this lack, the film is one of the most interesting to come out of National Socialist Germany. This makes Dr Goebbels's attempts to suppress the film all the more remarkable. Certainly the addition of the cumbersome introduction by the Propaganda Ministry does not help the film.

In addition, let us grant that the film was about the German army, and ignored the other branches of the Armed Forces. Why was this considered so awful? Some of the best English and American propaganda films about the war were made by one branch of the services, often about one platoon, ship or airplane. This often allowed the film a specificity that was lacking in official campaign films. There was nothing to stop the Luftwaffe or the Propaganda Ministry from making their own films about the campaign in the West, and in fact they later did so. It must be asked whether Dr

section. *Victory in the West*, even as it documents the greatest German victory of World War II, displays the deep rifts within the Third Reich which remained up to the end of the regime.

Correspondence: Cooper C. Graham, 14 Hillside Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21210, USA.

NOTES

- [1] SiW is available in numerous film archives, including the Library of Congress (FBA 2416-2421; Japanese Version FBB 0745-0748) and the National Archives in Washington (Signal Corps Film M527.6), the British Film Institute in London and the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz. In the United States, a complete half-inch videocassette in German is available from International Historic Films, Inc., in Chicago. However the sound is intermittently bad on this version. For a copy of the German dialogue continuity and the appendices, please contact the editor of this journal.
- Also of some use is the large illustrated program *Sieg im Westen: Der Kriegsfilmbereich des Heeres*, Berlin, 1941. This sold for thirty pfennigs and contains articles by Kurt Hesse, Erich Welter, Svend Noldan, Heinz Kluth and Hans Ertl. There is some interesting information, although a lot of it is not worth reading except for background. *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* N. 3178 (1941) also has SiW as its subject, and contains some good illustrations but very little useful information.
- I would like to thank David Culbert for reading this manuscript, and for his many contributions, which have helped this paper enormously. Dr Richard Alan Nelson of the University of Houston also gave me many useful ideas for this article. I am also greatly indebted to Patrick Loughney of the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division of the Library of Congress for his masterful frame enlargements.
- [2] S. KRACAUER (1955) *From Caligari to Hitler* (New York, Noonday Press), pp. 278-297.
- [3] For an excellent description of *Feuertaufe*, see D. WELCH (1983) *Propaganda and the German Cinema, 1933-1945* (Oxford, Clarendon), pp. 203-216.
- [4] The Influence Exerted by the Commander in Chief of the Army upon Propaganda Activities, and Establishment of Group Armed Forces V (Press Relations Group of the Army), Washington, DC, [ational] A[rchives], Kurt Hesse papers, RG 338, MS No. D-423, Volume 1, c. IV/2; Übergabe der Geschäfte des Gruppenleiters WPr V (Heer), Oberstleutnant Dr Hesse, an Nachfolger Oberstleutnant Schwatlos-Gesterding, NA, T-77, Records of Headquarters, German High Command, Roll 1040, 6613409-6613410.
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] F. HIPPLER (1981) *Die Verstrickung* (Düsseldorf, Verlag Mehr Wissen), p. 204.
- [7] D. IRVING (1977) *The Trail of the Fox* (New York, E. P. Dutton), p. 27.
- [8] H. ERTL (1985) *Hans Ertl als Kriegsberichtler, 1939-1945* (Innsbruck, Steiger), p. 27.
- [9] Secret order from the Oberkommando der Wehrmacht, 25 May 1940 to all Propaganda Companies, Army groups and WPr II, III and V. NA, T-77, Roll 976, 4464342-43.
- [10] May 11, 1940. NA, T-77, Roll 976, 4464348.
- [11] NA, T-77, Roll 976, 4464355-56.
- [12] HIPPLER, *Die Verstrickung*, p. 204.
- [13] ERTL, *Hans Ertl als Kriegsberichtler*, pp. 48-51.
- [14] H.H. HENNE Erbeutete Feindfilme, *Sieg im Westen: Der Kriegsfilmbereich des Heeres*, Berlin, 1941.
- [15] Entstehung und Aufbau des Heeresdokumentarfilms 'Sieg im Westen', c. V/5 Kurt Hesse Papers, NA, RG 338: WPr/Heer, Gruppenleiter. Betr. Aufbau des Heeresdokumentarfilms. Dated 'im November' NA, T-77, Roll 1012, 2477735-2477738.
- [16] ERTL, *Hans Ertl als Kriegsberichtler*, p. 49.
- [17] HANS ERTL, letter to author, Santa Cruz, Bolivia, December 6, 1986, which states in part: "... the shots of Eben Emael—in so far as telescopic shots of exploding armored pillboxes are concerned—were shot by a Luftwaffe cameraman with a telescopic lens. The scene of a man (Oberfeldwebel Bordsteffen [Portsteffen]) of the storm batallion headed by Mikosch jumping on an armored pillbox in order to lay and ignite a sticky bomb is a shot taken later, reconstructed by me using the same persons who had done the job a few weeks earlier during the battle."
- [18] ERTL, *Hans Ertl als Kriegsberichtler*, pp. 52-53; Irving, *The Trail of the Fox*, pp. 59-60; Kurt Hesse,

And they sing "Lieselotte,"
 Sing it with full throats,
 In the first and second ranks,
 And the third as well.
 Every man, attention!
 Lieselotte, be careful!
 One man is certainly still free,
 Tomorrow the war will be over,
 Lieselotte, Lieselotte!]

According to the article on Windt's music for the film, this song was written by a soldier in Brittany. However, the music seems to fit rather well Hesse's wish expressed in his memorandum of November, 1940 that Windt's music express the connection between the fighting man and the homeland. 'Musik: Herbert Windt'. *Sieg im Westen: Der Kriegsfilmbereich des Heeres*.

- [34] NA, T77, Roll 1040, 6613424.
- [35] FRÖLICH, *Tagebücher von Dr Goebbels*, 4, p. 509.
- [36] W. A. BOELCKE (1966) *Kriegspropaganda 1939-1941*. (Stuttgart), p. 610; R. E. HERZSTEIN (1978) *The War that Hitler Won* (New York, G. P. Putnam's Sons), p. 281, citing Lochner papers, at the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, Box 20 (27 January 1941) and Boelcke among others.
- [37] FRÖLICH, *Die Tagebücher von Dr Goebbels*, 4, p. 521.
- [38] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 524. Major Hans-Leo Martin was Dr Goebbels' liaison officer with the OKW.
- [39] ERTL, *Hans Ertl als Kriegsbericht*, p. 50.
- [40] FRÖLICH, *Tagebücher von Dr Goebbels*, 4, p. 510.
- [41] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 525.
- [42] *Ibid.*, 4, p. 534.
- [43] NA, T-77, Roll 1040, 6613409-22. Übergabe der Geschäfte des Gruppenleiters WPr V (Heer), Oberstleutnant Dr Hesse, an Nachfolger Oberstleutnant Schwatlos-Gesterding.
- [44] NA, T-77, Roll 976, 4464863-4465239. See especially: Abschliessender Bericht über den Einsatz des Filmes *Der Sieg im Westen*, T-77, Roll 976, 4465341-4465345, translated in Appendix II.
- [45] NA, T-77, Roll 976, 4465191-4465192.
- [46] Anti-Nazis Picket Uptown Theatre Here as German Propaganda Newsreel Opens, *New York Times*, 8 May 1941, p. 9; Axis Film Opposition Spreads to Riots, Censoring, Appeals to U.S., *Motion Picture Herald*, 10 May 1941, p. 17. I am once again indebted to David Culbert for showing me the records of the New York State Board of Censorship, in particular the findings of the Supreme Court of Sullivan County, New York in *Rollins v. Graves*, Document M-107, June 13 1941, 19566-C, New York State Archives, in which the court dismissed the petition to ban showing the film in New York State on the grounds that it was news rather than propaganda. It is interesting to note that Kurt Hesse would have not agreed (see p. 24).
- [47] T. TAYLOR (1958) *March of Conquest* (New York, Simon & Schuster), p. 350.
- [48] FRÖLICH, *Tagebücher von Dr Goebbels*, 4, p. 271.

Cooper C. Graham received his LLB from the University of Virginia, and his Ph.D. in cinema studies from New York University. He is the co-author of *D. W. Griffith and the Biograph Company (1985)* and the author of *Leni Riefenstahl and Olympia (1986)*. He is currently employed in the Motion Picture, Broadcasting and Recorded Sound Division of the Library of Congress.

the Westwall. Fortress engineers, construction troops, the Labor Service and the Organisation Todt work hand in hand and in no time at all stamp the great work out of the earth.

28) The Czechs place themselves under the protection of the German nation, and so drop out as a vassal of the western powers.

29) Only Poland remains as a hope for England and France.

30) The Germans in Poland undergo the most severe terror.

31) To solve the corridor question, the Führer makes repeated liberal offers.

32) The Warsaw administration answers these proposals with military demonstrations, with harsher and harsher terror against the German population. The English and French diplomats struggle feverishly for war.

33) On the First of September, 1939, the Führer announces in the Reichstag: "Last night for the first time, Poland attacked us with its regular troops. Since five-forty five we have been shooting back."

34) After 18 days, the enemy is completely beaten.

35) Warsaw surrenders.

36) Germany's eastern border is now free.

37) Now, long transports roll westward to strengthen the assembling forces in the defense of the Westwall.

38) In the unshakeable willingness for peace and in the knowledge of his strength, the Führer extends an offer of peace to the western powers, which is interpreted as a sign of weakness and rejected.

39) On the contrary, the enemy seeks to create new bases of operations in Scandanavia.

40) The Führer steals a march on this plan on April 9, 1940. 10 hours earlier, German troops occupy Denmark and Norway. The German Navy knocks all the trumps out of the hands of the English Navy. The cooperation between the three branches of the armed forces is exemplary.

41) From Narvik to Basel, an unbroken front stands against the west.

42) The soldier on the Westwall has a hard winter behind him. He waits for the enemy attack.

43) The trust of the army and of the whole German people belongs to the Führer, in whose hands the fate of Germany lies, who alone knows when the hour of the great decision will strike, but who also knows that this people in arms stands in true love behind him, and is ready at his call to start

Toward the Great Decision!

MAIN SECTION

THE CAMPAIGN

(Credit)

This film was shot by the cameramen of the reporting staff of the Commander-in-Chief and troops of the Army Film Unit, side by side with the fighting forces, with casualties. The enemy side is shown through captured English and French film.

On the night of 10 May 1940, the Führer made the following proclamation to the German people:

"Soldiers of the Westfront!

"The hour of the decisive battle for the future of the German nation has come. The German people have no hatred towards the English or French people. It is a question today, however, of whether it will survive or be destroyed. What we have seen as a great danger for several months has now come about. England and France are attempting, by use of a gigantic diversionary maneuver in southeastern Europe, to attack the Ruhr through Belgium and Holland. Soldiers of the Westfront! The hour has therefore come for you. The battle beginning today will decide the future of the German nation for the next thousand years."

The German leadership has received reports that a strong enemy group in the area of Lille, composed of a great number of French and English divisions, has orders to violate Belgian and Dutch neutrality and to advance against the lower Rhine and into the Ruhr.

The Belgian guards willingly open border barriers to the troops of the western powers.

When German troops enter, the enemy blows up bridges and crossings.

While the Belgian and Dutch borders are not fortified to the west, on the Ardennes front, on the Meuse and in the entire Dutch river and canal systems, extremely strong fortifications, tank traps and powerful obstacles have been erected toward the east.

The Führer forestalls the threatening attack with a bold plan. Here he discusses the operation with the Chief of Staff of the army, General von Brauchitsch. The German forces, divided into three army groups, are to attack with Army Group B of General von Bock on the right wing, and with Army Group A under

The German operations proceed as planned.

While a defensive flank is established on the Aisne, German tanks and innumerable infantry divisions behind them advance through Arras toward Amiens and the channel coast, on foot and by truck.

The German soldier has reached the channel.

The ring around the Anglo-French offensive army closes.

The hard-pressed formations undertake desperate counterattacks.

At Arras, enemy tanks attempt once more to break the ring and to escape to the south.

All attacks of the enemy fall on the firmly-held German front.

Side by side with the army fights the Waffen-SS.

The English general staff already recognizes the battle as lost. It attempts to bring its Expeditionary Corps to safety. About hanging the wash on the Siegfried Line, as they call the Westwall, there is no more talk.

Betrayed by the English, the King of Belgium offers the surrender of his army.

The leader of the sixth German Army, General Reichenau, presides at the surrender negotiations.

600,000 men give up. For them, the war is over.

The German leadership proceeds more and more boldly.

At Lille, a pincer movement around a strong French group is successful. From opposing sides, advancing from Ypres and Hasbrouck, German soldiers extend their hands to one another. The English heedlessly destroy the land of their brothers-in-arms.

German fliers start the attack on Dunkirk. The English attempt to save the shattered remnants of their divisions with warships and countless transports.

English flak fires from all barrels. But the German dive bombers know how to reach their target.

At the same time, the unstoppable attack goes forward on land. On June 4, Dunkirk falls. This the English call a glorious retreat.

The German Luftwaffe can report 24 warships and 66 transports destroyed at the end of the battle.

In 24 hours, two states were forced to capitulate, France's offensive force destroyed, the British Expeditionary Corps imprisoned or chased from the continent, and the channel coast gained as the base for the fight against England.

Still, France is not conclusively beaten. A second great deployment of the German Army takes place.

To accomplish this, there is a great movement of the lines of supply and communication from the east-west to the north-south direction. The heavy transport truck is the most common carrier in enemy territory. Under the leadership of the general quartermaster of the General Staff, a new supply base in northern France is built. What in these weeks was accomplished by the German truck drivers in personal performance will be entered into the history of the war.

15 million liters of fuel, 60 million kilograms of ammunition, 22 million kilograms of supplies are prepared for the troops. Over 300,000 kilometers are put into reserve through the rear echelon.

Long distance engineers of German Railroads, transport Echelon Speer, improvised supply columns, the Organisation Todt, technical emergency squads, countless Labor Service sections, working together, provide the leadership for the uninterrupted continuation of supply operations.

The young railroad engineer troops take pains to provide the quickest repair of the railroads and bridges in the occupied area.

Best friend of the German soldier is the armament worker. The quality of his performance is fully proved through the quality of German weapons.

By the orders of the chief of armaments and the Commander of the Reserve Armies, General Fromm, the necessary reserves are called up.

Under the leadership of General von Weichs and Strauss, the Second and the Ninth Armies are introduced into the new front which is being formed on the lower Somme and Aisne.

Despite incredible feats of marching, a few days of rest follow.

The High Command of the Armed Forces announces: "Our arms have attacked the French Army on a broad front. The crossing of the Somme and Aisne Canals was accomplished."

France puts all its hopes in the new General Weygand and his defense strategy, the Weygand Line. Every town and wood on the south bank of the Somme is transformed into a small fortress and is to be defended to the last.

In this fight of assault detachments and assault guns, the Luftwaffe attacks. It proves itself many times in the brotherhood of weapons.

Enemy aircraft guns lay down a barrage.

Enemy fighters!

At the same time, dive bombers destroy the enemy line of communication.

On the morning of June 5, German tank divisions start the attack over the Somme.

The French regime draws the only possible conclusion from the collapse; it asks for an armistice. Compiègne will be used as the showplace of this historic event.

On behalf of the Führer, the Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, General Keitel, will lead the negotiations in the historic railroad car where the armistice was signed in 1918.

After the victory in the West, the Führer and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces gave his appreciation of the deeds of the army with the words:

"The German soldier has himself to thank for the success of this masterly campaign in world history. In all situations in which he was placed, he proved himself to be of the highest quality."

Appendix II

General Staff of the Army

Berlin, July 1, 1941

Attaché Section I/Pr.

No. 2238/41 g

Closing Report on the Film *Sieg im Westen*

By agreement with the OKW/WPrI, from the beginning of February, 1941, the Attaché Section could deliver the subject film in German versions to all Military Attachés on a preferential basis. The Military Attachés received: 9 German 16 mm copies (Washington, Rio, Santiago, Buenos [with Portuguese list of titles], Rome, Belgrad, Sofia, Stockholm, Madrid); 21 35 mm sound copies (Berne, Rome, Athens, Ankara, Teheran, Belgrade, Budapest, Bucharest, Pressburg, Sofia, Moscow, Helsinki, Stockholm [3], Madrid, Tokyo [3], Lisbon, Berne [*sic*]).

In addition, the film was delivered dubbed in the following foreign languages: to the Military Attaché Madrid, Santiago, Buenos Aires in Spanish, to the Military attaché in Tokyo in Japanese, to the Military Attaché in Ankara and Rome in Arabic, to the Military Attaché in Teheran in Iranian, and in some cases, in special versions.

As a present from the Army High Command, the Attaché Section presented the film dubbed in Japanese to the Japanese Study Commission in the beginning of May 1941. In agreement with the OKW/WPr, in the beginning of February 1941, the Attaché Section gave a 16 mm sound copy to the Thai State Minister His Excellence Major Montri.

From the reports of German Military Attachés in neutral, especially friendly foreign countries, the film *Sieg im Westen* was generally premiered on festive occasions in collaboration with the Chiefs of the Missions before a large circle of important guests, leading men in the Armed Forces, politics, industry, and public life as well as the foreign Military Attachés. On these occasions, the film was introduced through a preliminary address of the German Military Attaché. Furthermore, the film was shown by the Military Attachés to many high officials, and given to certain General Staffs as a present. It can be emphasized that these first showings left an extremely strong impression on those present, and sometimes applause broke out. After these official parties, the film was placed at the disposal of the German colonies and consulates of friendly or neutral nations, and above all, selected officer corps, garrisons, cadet orders, student circles, etc., where it soon got a wide showing in important circles. In this connection, by arrangement with the representatives of Ufa, general public screenings began. The German Military Attachés have filed extensive reports about these which discuss the reception of the film among recognized circles and countries from the point of view of military propaganda. For the most part, the reports are long and contain selected criticism from the foreign point of view. It would be going too far to list all the generally favourable successes, or, as the case may be, all the petty criticisms here. As examples, we will set out only a few selected points that seem important.

1) In *Switzerland*, up to now, it has been impossible to obtain a public showing.

2) In the *Orient* (Teheran), it was noticeable that the results of the introduction had a psychologically oppressive effect. For their way of thinking, the film was consistently difficult to understand, especially the first predominantly domestic German historical section. Moreover the Iranians saw in the totality of the film a number of organizational and especially military means of enforcing power that are strange and novel for the Orient, and also unattainable for that fundamentally backwards country. So, this self-satisfied as well as sensitive people was shown a conflict between modern powers that also portrays the weakness of its own country and its defense. We are still waiting to see if the film will be a success dubbed into Iranian, since this has not yet come about. The same is true of the Arabic dubbing of the film.

3) In *Spain* the film's run was so strong that in one of the biggest film theaters with 700 seats, by the fifth