

Kevin Brownlow

**How It Happened Here**

## 1: A Primitive Start

To set down the memories of this period is to re-experience them. This I find acutely depressing. The early days of the film were days of despair, and to go through them for the sake of this book will reveal some uncomfortable truths. Over the years, it has been easy to let people think that I was once a minor visionary, taking on a large-scale feature film at the age of eighteen, dragooning friends and passers-by into crowd scenes, staging battles and rallies and causing mayhem in Central London.

Some of these facts are correct, but they suggest a colourful fantasy which does not compare with the truth. When I began this film, I had no idea it would take so long. I was convinced that once I had demonstrated my skill with a few sample sequences, a producer would sign me for some big feature, thereby relieving me of responsibility. The heart of the matter lies in one important fact—there was no script.

My first film, *The Capture*, had been shot without a script, although the story upon which it was based, Guy de Maupassant's *Les Presonniers*, had acted as a guide. For this new film, I produced a single-page outline, but that was all. Actors, technicians and friends begged me to write something more substantial to help them to understand what I wanted. I refused.

The reason behind this refusal is significant. After *The Capture*, I knew I was capable of making films, but I knew that a script was beyond me. A script required careful thought, deliberation, long hours of unrecognised work and, above all, discipline. If the script was a failure, I would receive no support for the film; I dared not show all my cards at once.

In the past I have explained that the celebrated Trafalgar Square sequence was tackled first because it was the hardest thing to do, that overcoming it would prove the film could be made. This was only partly true. The real reason was more plausible. The Trafalgar Square rally, the whole film at this stage, was sheer adolescent exhibitionism. I allowed my obsession with films to run away with me. Instead of starting at the bottom and working patiently upwards, I intended to begin on the

heights, in a blaze of glory.

In 1956, eleven years after the war, London had only just begun to recover. Bombed sites were still visible all over the city. The war was not so much a memory as an integral part of the atmosphere. Everyone over the age of fifteen had been affected by it, and still had clear recollections.

For several months, I had been a trainee in the cutting rooms of World Wide pictures, a documentary film company based in Soho. Trainee was another word for errand boy; my most frequent duty was to carry cans. I carried cans to the office in Soho Square. I carried them to preview theatres in Wardour Street. And I carried them to Humphries Laboratories, just off Tottenham Court Road. Oddly enough, this was the most enjoyable part of the job. Central London was unfamiliar; it was spring, it was sunny, and these walks provided time for reflection.

After *The Capture*, I was anxious for another project. *The Capture* had taken three years, had involved a cast of nearly a hundred and had hardly been shown at all. The story had been set in the Franco-Prussian war; modernised to 1940 it told how a German patrol, captured by a forester's daughter, is taken into custody by the local National Guard, who are given credit for the whole operation. The story was a study in irony. I weighted it too heavily with drama and detail and lost the delicacy of the original. But the film had been well received, and the encouragement of such people as Lindsay Anderson and Derek Hill stimulated me to ideas of another picture.

Walking towards the laboratories, I was jolted by a black Citroen screeching to a halt. The driver leaped out and ran to a delicatessen. He paused at the door and shouted to his companion in German. The scene was straight out of a war film; only the surroundings were unusual, The incident triggered a train of thought. What *might* have happened if the Germans had invaded England?

From this premise, I worked out the basis for an extravagant piece of historical fiction. The single page outline was entitled, emphatically, *It DID Happen Here!*

While studying the national characteristics of the English and German, the film will try to demonstrate the inevitability of war, by showing from one side its utter fu-

tility, and from the other its invaluable stimulus to the development of the human race.'

The central character was to be a woman, forced to evacuate her home in the country and move to London, the much defended capital of Occupied England. The outline gave details of the background, but avoided the personal story, of which I had only the vaguest ideas. But the hypothesis grew more and more flamboyant, describing how the Germans had broken through to Russia, and were subjecting America, the one strong power holding out against the Axis forces, to heavy air offensives over the Bering Straits. In the West, England, overrun in 1940 and almost completely industrialised, was producing materials to enable the Nazis to rebuild the devastated areas and to establish the New Order even further afield. 'The end of the film shows the woman's final surrender to the Nazi way of life. America realises that England is no longer an ally, even in spirit. Long-range bombers, unable to reach London because of impenetrable defences, drop atom bombs on the Northern industrial towns, crippling the entire country and making it useless to the occupying powers, who move out, as the Romans did in 410, leaving a shattered, degraded population to live together without moral support.'

The manifesto had been written in the first flush of enthusiasm. When I tried to enlarge on it, I found my imagination frozen. The scale of the production, so challenging in the abstract, had become a cold fact.

Those who read the outline asked some uncomfortably leading questions. 'How are you going to stage it? Who will you get for the crowd scenes? What will you use for money?' Finance I regarded as the least important obstacle. I have no head for business, and no talent for fund-raising. I limped through *The Capture* by spacing out the shooting sessions until I could afford them. In those days, I depended upon pocket money, earnings from odd jobs and a series of articles on film collecting which I wrote for *Amateur Cine World*. This series was still running, and I was also earning £4.10s a week as a trainee. I could order film stock at trade rates and on credit. Uniforms and props I could borrow for next to nothing from Peter Dunlop, a costumier friend. Somehow, I would manage...

As an act of encouragement, Gordon Malthouse, the editor of *Amateur Cine World*, lent me his 16 mm camera and on Sunday, 6 May 1956, without attempting to secure permission, I invaded the May Day Rally. By mingling actors dressed as German soldiers among the people in Trafalgar Square, I thought I would obtain a spectacular crowd scene.

The leading actor, playing a German naval officer, sauntered into the square in search of the leading actress—who had yet to be cast. A Nazi eagle flaring from his jacket, he was followed by three German soldiers, one of them carrying a Schmeisser sub-machine-gun, the other two clutching rifles. To my relief, no one took the slightest notice. It was the hottest day of the year, and the crowds had come more to sun themselves than to listen to speeches. Unfortunately, they were gaily dressed and wreathed in smiles. No one looked sullen or cowed or in any way under duress, which was more than could be said for my extras.

A group of Danish girls watched our antics. 'We knew this was a demonstration,' said one, 'but we didn't know it was a Nazi demonstration.' When one person notices you filming in a crowd, the message is transmitted with telepathic speed. 'Take off those jackboots!' yelled a voice from the balustrade above our heads 'Take off those caps! Go on, take 'em off! We'll have no aping of Fascists here.' A policeman arrived with a Party representative, who accused us of posing the soldiers in front of the banners. We were given no alternative; we had to go.

The Trafalgar Square sequence would have to be reshot, but after our May Day escapade, would the Ministry of Works grant permission?

'What exactly do you wish to film in the Square?' asked a Ministry official.

'A scene with some soldiers.'

'Soldiers? How many soldiers?'

'About ten,' I lied.

'I see. Will you be bringing any heavy equipment, lights, generators?'

'No, nothing like that. It will all be very simple.'

'Very well, Mr. Brownlow, I see no problem...'

And in due course a little card arrived from the Ministry giving permission for a

session between 8 and 10 a.m. on Sunday.

Setting up a session, even at this primitive stage, required an incredible number of telephone calls. From the list of actors and technicians, I selected the people we required. Some of them were only too anxious to help. Others, dismayed at the prospect of getting up early on a Sunday morning, presented innumerable excuses. Most of the calls had to be made during working hours, and I was guiltily aware that I was paid to work as a trainee, not to squander my time on private errands. If this session was a success I could relax for a while, and concentrate on my job. Until then, the film came first.

There was something terribly wrong with the Trafalgar Square sequence, and as the precious film whirred through the camera, I felt slightly sick. The extras were stiff and self-conscious, and the props and costumes hung limply, soaked by the spray from the fountains. I could manage none of the subtler forms of direction; all I could do was issue instructions and get the cast moving, like a traffic cop.

The failure of this vital scene hurt. During the next few sessions, several actors walked out, including the lead. Faced with a growing pile of material, practically all of it useless, and a growing pile of debts, I should have seriously considered abandoning the project. For some reason this never entered my head. Setbacks had occurred en masse during *The Capture*, yet the quality of material had been more imaginative and more satisfactory. Strongly influenced by silent films, *The Capture* depended upon pastoral effects and careful lighting to create atmosphere. *It Happened Here* was largely an exterior picture, and the quality of photography was dictated by the weather. So far, both had been dull.

One evening, I met my art director, Jim Nicolson, to discuss plans. He had agitated for a script since he joined the unit. How could he design a scene he knew nothing about? I avoided the issue, and began discussing the Trafalgar Square session. Nicolson analysed its faults, and drew on a piece of paper an indication of what it *should* have been.

He placed the long banner, with the inscription DEUTSCHLAND UND

ENGLAND-EINE RASSEGEMEINSCHAFT! (Germany and England—One Race!) on the dais, and positioned ten flags behind it. The central point was a huge swastika. It was a bold design but I was very dejected. 'Why couldn't we have thought of that *then*?'

'We can still do it,' said Nicolson.

'Again?'

'It wouldn't cost that much. We've got four of the flags. We've got the banner, and we've got the swastika for the dais. But we need more people than we've had before. And you must get better uniforms.'

'What's wrong with the ones I've got?'

'They're all right for long shots, or for close-ups if your photography is rough. If your photography is sharp and clear, it will show up all the defects.'

I decided that we needed a technical adviser. One of the volunteers who wrote in after an appeal in *Amateur Cine World* was a former sergeant in the Wehrmacht, Franz März, who claimed to have won the Iron Cross first class on the Russian Front, and produced documents to substantiate his story. He was not too happy in England, and seized upon my film as a chance to relive the old days. For the ex-sergeant this was a last chance to be an officer, and he eagerly accepted the post of technical adviser.

To secure Trafalgar Square, all I had to do was to renew the existing permit. Most of the old guard, who had been with the film since its inception, promised to attend. And a number of new people signed on, including an 18-year-old amateur cine enthusiast, Christopher Slaughter, who became the only person to survive the entire picture. We were the same age, and we grimly compared birthdays every time we met, unable to believe that so much time had passed.

The evening before the great day, ITV's news department rang up; they wanted to send a camera crew. Delighted at the prospect of such publicity, I telephoned Nicolson to tell him the good news.

'If they come, I don't,' he said flatly.

I could scarcely believe my ears. How could anything be cancelled as late as this?

'That's your problem,' said Nicolson. 'I work in television. I'm a professional art director. If they find me working on amateur films, it could damage my career. You'll have to put them off.'

Alarmed at the prospect of a complete fiasco, I persuaded the TV people to cancel the call, and told Nicolson he need worry no longer.

'I'm still not coming,' he said. 'I've thought it over, and frankly, I've had enough.'

'But what about the material for the set?'

'You'll have to forget it.'

Realising my plight, my mother broke her rule of non-interference and took the 'phone. Her gentle persuasion was more effective than my protests, and soon Nicolson was having dinner with us. The atmosphere was strained. Nicolson stood by his decision. His livelihood was at stake; why should he jeopardise it? However, he agreed to release the props, but I would have to pick them up—and there were too many for one vehicle.

He lived in Streatham. I lived in Swiss Cottage and could not drive. Furthermore, it was getting late. By one of those unlikely chances which occurred throughout the film, the doorbell rang—and there was a young man called Peter West, offering his services. He could drive. A friend in the police force loaned his car, and Franz März agreed to take his vehicle down to Streatham first thing in the morning. I hardly slept that night.

At 5.30 a.m. the telephone rang. März was in trouble. He reported thick fog all over London, and he had lost his way. I gave him Nicolson's number and told him to keep trying.

The fog was slightly thinner in the centre of town. An Inspector was on duty with two constables, ready to stop the proceedings unless I could produce my permit. I brought out the Ministry's little card. 'If it was up to me,' said the Inspector, 'you wouldn't set foot on the Square.'

At 8.10, two cars, laden with material for the set, triumphantly raced into the Square. In the leading car sat Jim Nicolson: 'I decided to come after all.' While he supervised the construction, I took over a cul-de-sac behind the Square and put the fifty

extras into uniform. Residents, disturbed by the commotion, must have been startled by the sight that greeted them. Grouped around an open car, which was used as a clothes-store, a number of men were undressing in broad daylight. Steel helmets and swastika armbands could hardly have allayed their bewilderment. Fortunately, the actors looked too sheepish to cause real alarm.

When the set had been erected and the actors positioned, the result exceeded my hopes. Nicolson had done a splendid job. But filmically, how could I do justice to the scene? I had not learned how to appraise a set from the camera point of view. I settled for a straightforward long shot, with a few close-ups. The establishing shot was framed by the heads of some extras standing in front of the camera; this gave the impression of a crowd.

A nagging suspicion of mediocrity haunted me as I watched the set being dismantled. Suddenly I spotted a perfect set-up: three-quarters on to the plinth, with a Landseer lion dominant. This should have been the main establishing shot. Our cameraman had used his own equipment on this session, and I had left the camera loaned by ACW's editor in the open car. To my horror, I discovered that the man detailed to guard it had wandered off to watch the shooting—and the camera had been stolen.

The following morning, the press broke the story of our 'Nazi Rally'. The *Daily Mail* headlined their pictures: 'The Nazis Are Here in a Boy's Film!' The *Express* countered with a follow-up story the next day, which quoted the Ministry of Works: 'It was due to a complete misunderstanding on our part. We do not allow filming in costume in Trafalgar Square. Had we known it was going to be in Nazi uniforms we should not have granted permission. This is probably the first time anything like this has taken place there—and the last.'

(Excerpts from Chapters Two and Seventeen)

## 2. Agonising Reappraisal

As the winter of 1956 took its grip, and the chance of people agreeing to get up early receded, I gloomily took stock of the situation.

I had spent money I did not possess, lost several friendships and squandered the leisure of people who could ill afford to be deprived of it. Before this, I could have abandoned the film at any time. Now I was committed to finishing it – not only for my sake, but for theirs.

But the sad truth was that *It Happened Here* had advanced only fractionally. The number of shooting days had been few, but the amount of stock exposed had been disproportionately high.

Publicity, however, had been widespread, and many volunteers had written in. German war souvenirs continued to trickle through the post. An *Arbeitsdienst* flag arrived from a public library in Penge, a Gauleiter's hat from a source in Hornsey.

There was a good supply of glistening medals, gaudy armbands and colourful badges. Completely unobtainable were boots, tunics and caps. Wartime souvenir hunters, like magpies, picked out the prettiest items.

However, I was told of a Russian family in Kensington who collected old helmets, and someone reported that a stall in Portobello Road market specialised in military uniforms, particularly German.

I went to the market and discovered a small booth, lined with helmets, swords, flags and medals. My first impression, of a military cornucopia, was misleading; there was precious little of any practical use.

'I'm looking for German uniforms,' I explained to the stall-holder. 'Do you have any tunics or peaked caps?'

'There's very little about. I've got a lot of collectors on my books. They're all after it.'

‘Can you put me in touch with some of them?’

‘Well, there’s one.’

He introduced me to a young man who looked like an art student. Forewarned about collectors, and believing the newspaper line that they were all raving Nazis, I regarded this one with suspicion.

His name was Andrew Mollo and he was, in fact, an art student. He said he was very interested in collecting German military uniforms, and actually owned a number of items.

I decided to impart my secret in the hope of eliciting further information.

‘Did you know,’ I said, ‘that there’s a Russian family in Kensington who collect old helmets?’

‘I think that’s us,’ said Mollo diffidently. His family specialised in military history. I told him about the film, and the idea excited him.

‘Why don’t you come and see my collection?’ he asked.

Never appear too eager with collectors: being a film collector myself, I was well aware of this golden rule, so I waited a few days.

The first surprise was his house, an imposing Victorian building in Queen’s Gate Gardens, Kensington, the sort of place used by Embassies. And his room was most unusual. Well proportioned, it had a red ceiling, one black wall and two white ones. Art student whims, I surmised. But at the back of my mind was a disturbing recollection: red, white and black were the German colours. A bust of Hitler, standing on a bookcase, alarmed me further.

My anxiety was overwhelmed by enthusiasm when I caught sight of a field-grey German peaked cap. I had searched everywhere for one of those. Mollo also produced a soldier’s tunic, in perfect condition.

‘Would you consider helping us on the film?’ I asked. ‘If you allowed us to use your uniforms, we would give you ours.’ My collection consisted of some bric-à-brac, one heavily patched Wehrmacht tunic and some made-up uniforms.

Mollo agreed: ‘I’d like to put my collection to a creative use.’ He added that he had been collecting for about a year.

‘How old are you?’

‘Sixteen,’ he said.

Sixteen! To an eighteen-year-old, sixteen is not merely young, it is infantile. Several boys had asked to help on the film, but had drifted away after the first few sessions. In this case, time would tell.

Andrew was eager to see what had so far been shot, so I asked him round to my parents’ flat, set up my projector and screened the rushes on the wall. I had no illusions about the material. I thought it adequate, and no more. But Andrew was bitterly disappointed. To him, a film was a film – something you saw at the cinema. He had never heard of amateur films. He had thought *It Happened Here* was a full-scale, professional production. Even his untrained eye could see that the material was bad.

‘It’s all incorrect,’ he declared.

‘What’s incorrect about it?’

‘Everything. Nothing’s right.’

Offended, I diverted his attention from the film and produced the prize of my costume department, a German officer’s tunic.

‘That’s incorrect, too.’

‘That,’ I informed him, ‘is absolutely authentic.’

‘Excuse me,’ he answered aggressively. ‘The collar patch is wrong. The pockets are the wrong shape. The badge is made up. The whole thing is a costumier’s invention.’

For one awful moment, I thought he was going to back out. I didn’t mind losing him – he would obviously become an embarrassment, anyway – but I had to hold on to his tunic and hat.

I later discovered that Andrew was not the sort of person to throw up his hands in despair. Instead of thinking ‘How can I get out of this?’ he tried to work out the best way to improve the film.

One answer was to discard all the old material, and re-shoot it with the correct uniforms. We had lost several actors, so a certain amount of re-shooting was essential.

But we could hardly do the Trafalgar Square scene again, and there was a sequence including German aircraft, shot at a Battle of Britain display, which could never be repeated. Andrew said he was willing to involve himself completely in the production. He would ensure that the uniforms and equipment were absolutely correct. But he did not want the effect ruined by the early material.

‘All right,’ I said. ‘We’ll redo the scene building up to the rally, just as soon as we have enough uniforms.’

Andrew rapidly acquired a number of rare items: a black 55 tunic...an army great-coat...soldiers’ tunics...

As he became more involved with the project, he introduced me to his family. His father, Eugene Mollo, was Russian. His mother was English, a brilliant photographer and portrait painter. The oldest brother, John, was an illustrator and collector, and he and another brother (Boris) collected English military equipment. Andrew’s father specialised in Russian Imperial items.

At this period, Eugene Mollo sharply influenced my approach to the film. His philosophical discussions were often hilarious, but always profound. They gave me a groundwork in political history, and made me acutely aware of my ignorance on the subject. Eugene Mollo’s detached analyses, tinged with cynicism, helped to mature *It Happened Here* from an action melodrama to a political investigation.

Andrew himself, although only sixteen, gave an impression of confidence and self-reliance which belied his age. He was still rather inarticulate, and his struggles to express himself

often made him furious. But before long he was a powerful ally, possessing the all-important business acumen which I lacked. He was also very practical; his talents embraced sculpture and textile design, as well as drawing, carpentry and costume, though he disliked writing, and spelled ‘up’ with two ‘p’s’. If you pointed this out, he would spell it with three ‘p’s’. This stubborn individuality made him totally unpredictable. I could never forecast how he would react to a particular idea or situation, and this made the reaction all the more interesting.

Andrew was obviously an ideal technical adviser. But Franz März still filled this

post and I knew that any attempt to remove him would arouse the Teutonic Furies. So I marked time, trying to think of a solution. The solution was provided by März himself a few weeks later, when he decided to emigrate to India.

Gradually, members of the unit departed, to be replaced by fresh talent; Grant Thomson, from Vogue studios, an enthusiastic actor and cameraman until he went abroad; and Rosemary Claxton, a colleague of Grant's from Vogue, who became stills photographer and continuity girl. She later started a department for civilian wardrobe and tracked down authentic clothes of the 1940 period. The presence of people like this on the unit gave me a new impetus.

For our first session together, we had an ideal location, littered with war debris, an original Mercedes car and accurate uniforms.

But these elements were not enough. My approach was wrong. I was reproducing, against a real backdrop, a totally unreal scene – a scene from a war film instead of an incident from life.

To add to my difficulties, I was having to photograph it myself. The cameraman from our previous sessions was not available, and since our regular camera had been stolen, I was forced to hire one. The machine was unfamiliar, and its complicated gadgetry alarmed me.

While coping with the actors, I often resorted to uninhibited bullying, not through malice but simply to disguise my lack of confidence.

There are no worse ways of directing people than shouting at them. I was aware of this, and tried to remain calm. I would explain a scene carefully and then watch a rehearsal.

If the scene looked poor I would lose my temper – not with the actors but with my inability to get the scene right. Andrew and I yelled angrily at each other. Neither of us knew exactly what we wanted, but we both knew it wasn't this.

The rushes were depressingly bad. Even Grant Thomson, the optimist of the unit, complained. That evening, I decided to call a halt...

## 17: The Nazis Speak

We decided to cast Frank Bennett, whose party we had attended back in 1960, in a prominent role as an English Fascist officer. He knew we were presenting the Nazi case ‘accurately and objectively’, and he therefore accepted.

Our aim was to allow the Nazis to discuss their beliefs, to bring their sickness into the open, and to condemn themselves out of their own mouths.

We hoped to show that Fascism meant not only concentration camps and brutality; we wanted to bring it closer to the conscience of the audience, some of whom might agree with the Nazis without suspecting that their opinions were shared by extremists.

We set up for the discussion scene in the lounge of the Rembrandt Hotel; its decor, unchanged since the 1930s, provided an ideal backdrop.

We gathered the group together – among them two Nazis and one Fascist – gave them drinks, and let them mellow before we took our first shot.

In the story, they have just returned from the propaganda film.

As we come upon them, Pauline is listening to Frank Bennett describing the early days with Mosley. Then she refers directly to the film-within-a-film scene which showed blitzed London while the narrator talked of ‘these fruits of Jewish control’.

‘Why did the film blame the Jews for the Blitz?’ she asks.

We set the camera on the Nazis and fired questions like this, as at a live television discussion. Some questions were too awkward, and Bennett held his hand in front of the lens. But

all the replies used in the sequence were spontaneous. For instance:

THOMAS: It's not that the Aryans are so superior – but every race is superior to the Jew. The Jew has no home. The Jew is a parasite race. The Jew waits for a civilisation to be established, and establishes himself on it. A flea on a dog.

BENNETT: Yes, fleas can live on a dog, but fleas can't live on fleas. Send them all to Madagascar, that's the simplest way.

THOMAS (off): ...and let them cheat one another instead of cheating the people they've lived off for the past centuries.

Apart from the anti-Semitic diatribe, the Nazis brought up the subject of euthanasia, and the discussion sequence became a vital precursor to Lidlington.

The Fascist says, simply: 'Euthanasia? It's a surgical operation, getting rid of useless matter, useless tissue. Any doctor does it ten times a day, if it's necessary.'

Pauline asks: 'If you had a small child who contracted some disease that left him paralysed, as well he might, would he then be just waste tissue to be got rid of?'

'Exactly,' says the Fascist.

'Certainly,' says Bennett.

The completion of the discussion scene was a great boost to our morale. Even if the rest of the picture failed, we could depend on one scene of real value.

No film since the end of the war had given National Socialists carte blanche to express their opinions, with the result that few people had a clear idea of what they stood for, or of the insidious threat they represented. But it wasn't long before we, too, were denied the right to free speech over this sequence...

The film we were now making had little in common with the film we were making in

Berwick St John.

As our attitudes had changed, so the film had altered stylistically. No longer was there the slightest hint of the conventional war film. The military sequences, intended to recur throughout the picture, were now relegated to beginning and end. The psychological effects of occupation interested us now as much as the atmosphere. Sensational scenes were deleted or carefully underscored.

Had the film been made within the first year or so, it might well have been a lurid action picture. Now we had learned the value of understatement, the effectiveness of restraint.

Andrew and I had always visualised the picture in a different way. My wild ideas of invasion scenes and atom bombings had been sobered by Andrew's practical view of reality. Now our approaches were coinciding. We understood each other better, our ideas grew from a common ground and we worked together more efficiently.

The film had changed in other directions, too; working on a semiprofessional basis, with equipment on hire, meant that spending time no longer saved us money. In the old days, we could afford to wait for a day or a week to secure some vital prop at half price. Now we were paying for the hire of the camera, ancillary equipment, tape recorder, tracking equipment and sometimes even vehicles.

To stay within our budget, Andrew scheduled the script ruthlessly, and I found it hard to work fast and achieve results which satisfied us both.

(Occasionally, a player would reveal unexpected talent and we could race ahead of schedule. One such player was Miles Halliwell, who appeared as an IA lecturer. Having been coached by Frank Bennett on the tenets of Nazism, Halliwell brilliantly improvised his lecture, delivering it so well it sounded as though he believed it, which was very far from the truth. Thanks to his effortless performance, I was able to elaborate a static midshot into an intricate tracking shot. The camera followed Halliwell slowly from side to side as he paced the room, gradually coming closer until the whole lecture ended in a closeup...)

The big funeral sequence was staged in the Albany Street Territorial Army drill hall.

The complete dressing for this sequence – uniforms, flags, drapes – even the huge silver sword dominating one wall – was made by Andrew; and the entire Mollo family was press-ganged into sewing brassards and buttons onto tunics.

A firm of funeral directors supplied a coffin, wreaths and a set of candlesticks last used at King George VI's lying in state. The coffin was draped with Fascist flags; behind it was a rostrum, flanked by standards from each country within the British Isles.

Now Peter Suschitzky was faced for the first time with elaborate effect lighting. Alarmed at the prospect, he once again suggested calling upon the assistance of his father. I told him I would like his father to light the film, but we couldn't have two cameramen.

'We are willing to take the risk. You must, too.'

With nightfall, the lighting was complete, and the atmosphere impressively Wagnerian. It was too real for one man: he took a swift look inside the drill hall, took off his uniform and fled...