

Institute of National Remembrance

<https://eng.ipn.gov.pl/en/news/4742,Early-footage-from-the-war-that-would-resemble-no-other.html>

30.03.2026, 14:06

21.10.2020

Early footage from the war that would resemble no other

Courtesy of the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, the IPN is presenting Julien Bryan's "Siege" - the famous photojournalist and filmmaker's account of the German attack on Warsaw in September 1939, and of the plight of civilians.

In addition to being the first, the film stands out as showing the war from the perspective of its victims. German Third Reich newsreels used the footage provided by the Wehrmacht's *Propagandakompanien*, which was the view of the German riflemen, artillery and tank crews, as well as military pilots. What Bryan shot in Warsaw was what the people on the other end of the gun saw and experienced: ruined houses, burning hospitals and libraries, death in the streets, survival efforts, despair and courage. The American journalist truthfully reported both destruction and resistance, and while shocked by the former, he was deeply impressed by the latter, by "Warsaw's will to survive", as he put it.

The Siege - that film could have got an Oscar

In October 1939, the American magazines published Julian Bryan's report and pictures. He was the only foreign journalist who stayed in Warsaw in September 1939. Thanks to him, the world found out how hideous German occupation was. Leaving Poland, Bryan took away hundreds of metres of film. The footage, he gathered, let him produce a movie that is available on IPNTV.

They do not feel war in Hollywood

On 27 February 1941, the largest hall at the Biltmore Hotel in Los Angeles is packed to the brim. Here is America. Everything most expensive and most popular is in here. Here are John Ford, Georg Cukor, James Steward, Gary Cooper, Orson Welles, Laurence Olivier, Henry Fonda, and Sam Wood. Here is the petite Katherine Hepburn who is about to start a dizzying career. This is the 13th Academy Awards.

What is Julien Bryan doing in here? This globetrotter is a man who has closely watched two totalitarianisms – Nazi Germany and Bolshevik Russia. Who in September 1939, near Warsaw, cuddled Kazimiera Mika, a 12-year-old girl sobbing over the body of her sister who was shot by the Germans. In Los Angeles, he wants to show *The Siege* – a 10-minute-long film about occupied Warsaw.

Bryan is most probably nervously watching the following film stars. Looking at this glamour, he may remember the scenes that he saw several months ago, when he watched Warsaw being destroyed by the Germans, when he himself was not sure that he would survive. There,

the war is on in Europe. The Germans are attacking other countries. Members of the academy do not seem to notice it. George Cukor's sweet comedy *The Philadelphia Story* starring Cary Grant, Katharine Hepburn and James Stewart is the most widely discussed. In the Oscar's race, *The Great Dictator*, an American political satire comedy-drama, starring Charlie Chaplin succumbs to *Rebecca*, a horror film by Alfred Hitchcock.

Bryan's film belongs to the Live Action Short Subject, One-Reel category. This verdict will be read almost at the end of the ceremony. The moment is coming. The Oscar goes to *Quicker 'N a Wink*, a film about experiments with stroboscopic photography.

Opcje strony

- [Print this page](#)
- [Generate PDF of this page](#)
- [Notify about this page](#)

• Share this article

[Share on Facebook](#)

[Share on Twitter](#)