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NANGA PARBAT

**EIN EPOS HELDISCHEN
KAMPFES IM EWIGEN EIS**

Rescuing German Alpine Tradition: Nanga Parbat and Its Visual Afterlife

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IN THE INTRODUCTION TO HIS SEMINAL STUDY of National Socialist cinema *The Ministry of Illusion*, Harvard film scholar Eric Rentschler, reflecting upon a then recent visit to the 1992 Berlin exhibit celebrating the seventy-fifth birthday of *Universum-Film Aktiengesellschaft* (UFA; Universum Film Studios), pointed to the continuing presence of films produced under National Socialist rule on contemporary German television, particularly on the Bavarian regional station *Bayerischer Rundfunk* (BR; Bavarian Public Radio and Television). More importantly, he observed that "these selections are cheerfully introduced as fond memories or old standards; announcers rarely say anything about these films' political provenance."¹ The unreflected and uncritical presentation of such highly incriminated material in the German media, Rentschler claims with reference to several commentators of the Berlin exhibit, may be interpreted as "an act of reclamation, an attempt to rekindle dreams of a greater Germany, a quite timely endeavor in a reconstituted nation casting about for viable legacies and overarching commonalities."² More recently, Austrian art historian Christian Rapp has confirmed Rentschler's assessment in his study on the German *Bergfilm* (mountain film), a genre repeatedly identified as representing a "pre-fascist" aesthetics in regard to both its visual and ideational dimension.³

Facing page: Advertisement for *Nanga Parbat: Bildbericht der Deutschen Himalaja-Expedition 1934* in *Illustrierter Film-Kurier*. COURTESY PRIVATE COLLECTION OF HARALD HÖBUSCH.

Not only does Rapp observe a "revitalization of these films and directors in a series of cinema and television documentaries" but also a disturbing tendency "to free these films and their directors from the accusation of fascism. Especially in regard to the mountain films one claims that they 'don't have anything to do with National Socialist ideology' and that they are first and foremost examples of 'great film history.'"⁴

While in these and several other studies the afterlife of the National Socialist feature film in general⁵ and the mountain film in particular⁶ have been thoroughly explored and discussed, very little has been revealed to date of the afterlife of another genre which, in its day and age, had garnered attention similar in scope to that of the popular Nazi features, including the *Bergfilm*: the mountain documentary or *Expeditionsfilm*.⁷ It is my intent in this essay to correct this oversight by investigating the troublesome afterlife of two documentaries on German Himalaya expeditions of the 1930s, *Nanga Parbat* (1936) and *Kampf um den Himalaja* (*Struggle for the Himalayas*, 1938) in an early post-World War II production titled *Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen* (*German Himalaya Expeditions*, 1951). Specifically, I will show how the selective visual and textual adaptation of two documentaries with close personal and ideological ties to the National Socialist movement and its propaganda efforts permits the author to separate German mountaineering efforts on Nanga Parbat from their National Socialist context, to de-politicize not only the expeditions themselves but also their representation on film. The result of this recasting of a tainted segment of German alpine history—this intentional "denazification"—is a sanitized version of German Himalaya mountaineering under National Socialist rule, a version contributing to a much-desired continuity in form of a nonpolitical and therefore unproblematic German alpine tradition in the immediate post-World War II era.

The "Conquest of Space"—German Himalaya Mountaineering and Nationalism

The tradition of German Himalaya mountaineering had been forged primarily during the 1930s. In the years following World War I, Germany's leading mountaineers had begun to set their sights on goals located well beyond their traditional area of activity, the European Alps. In the decade between 1928 and 1939 German expeditions repeatedly traveled to such remote locations as the Andes, the Pamir and, most importantly, the Himalayas. Alpine historians have attributed this shift from a local to a global focus in German mountaineering to two related causes: first, to a chauvinist attitude of competition fueled by British attempts at Mount Everest, the world's tallest mountain, and their successes in consistently pushing upward the world altitude record;⁸ second, and more importantly, to the desire among German mountaineers for the reconstitution of their nation as a recognizable European (and even world) power in the decade immediately following World War I.

During that decade, in 1923, the young Weimar Republic experienced a crisis that threatened the very foundations of its brief existence. Facing defeat in the extended stand-off with the French during the so-called "Ruhrkampf," its currency rapidly heading towards collapse due to hyperinflation generated by the sustained struggle in the Ruhr, the Republic had its internal stability further threatened by revolutionary activities on both ends of the political spectrum: the so-called Communist "German October" and the Hitler

putsch of November 8 and 9. The result of this crisis, as German social historian Detlef J. K. Peukert has observed, was for many Germans the first true realization and acknowledgment of the defeat in World War I and its devastating political and economic consequences.⁹ With this realization, the question of recovery from a lost war not only in material terms but also, if not even more so, in psychological terms, i.e., in regard to German national identity and standing, would become one of the most pressing questions of the years to come.

In German and Austrian alpine journals of the period, the perception that the mountains and the act of mountaineering could serve as an antidote to present feelings of national inferiority and lead Germany back on the path to greatness can be traced to exactly this time.¹⁰ In a 1922 *Zeitschrift des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins (ZDÖAV; Journal of the German and Austrian Alpine Club)* article titled "Die Berge und ihre Bedeutung für den Wiederaufbau des deutschen Volkes" ("The Mountains and their Significance for the Restoration of the German Nation"),¹¹ a Dr. Gustav Müller calls upon his contemporaries to recognize the essence of both the mountains and mountaineering in the notion of "struggle" and, more importantly, connects this essential notion to the current feelings of defeat and depression in Germany:

Struggle is everywhere in the mountains. The foaming mountain stream, the glacier against the rock, the most delicate plant—they all struggle. The nature of the mountains is struggle. The nature of the seemingly inanimate matter of the flora, the fauna in the mountains, always it is struggle. We as mountaineers cannot escape it, we cannot and we shall not. We search for the struggle and are happy to find it in the mountains. . . . If only our people shared some of the toughness, of the patience and power we observe in the struggle of the alpine flora, then our people would be better off, and nothing could have bowed them. They gave up the struggle.¹²

Blaming his own generation for relenting in the fight against the adversaries of World War I, Müller claims that adopting the notion of struggle as the guiding principle for one's everyday life carries with it the potential to strengthen a sick people—"ein krankes Volk zu ertüchtigen."¹³

Only when the German people and especially the German youth recognize the struggle as the eternal law of the world and will search for no other reward than the awareness to have acted the way they were supposed to in the fulfillment of their duty in struggle, distress and danger, only then will we Germans again be able to call ourselves a great people and become invincible. . . . Yes, in the mountains we still find ideals. . . . There . . . is the realm of unselfish struggle; there burns the fire of patriotism. . . . From these treasures, Alldeutschland, draw your will, your courage, and your power for your existential struggle; there, Jungdeutschland, steel your arms, your senses, and your will, nourish your soul and forge your defenses!¹⁴

While Dr. Gustav Müller postulates a seemingly "natural" connection between mountaineering, struggle, and armed conflict and identifies the mountains in general as a possible path to German national renewal, his contemporary Dr. Heinrich Pfannl, a well-known Viennese alpinist, became more specific as to where this renewal would take place. In 1926, in an article published in the *Österreichische Alpenzeitung (Austrian Alpine Journal)*, Pfannl identified the future goals of a new generation of German mountaineers as

global ones and encouraged the exploration and discussion of various issues related to the planning and staging of future expeditions. For Pfannl, traveling to the far reaches of the globe had but one goal: to search for one's identity, to find one's "home":

This year, the *ÖAK* has to build its house—which is the task of the old generation who has to pass on as a whole what they themselves inherited as a whole. The youth, however, desires to conquer the world once again through new deeds! And although we know very well that you will always find yourselves, whether you glance at India's sky in the eternal Himalayas or at glaciers pushing southward in the Andes: it is your right to search for yourselves in the most distant regions, to find your home by traveling far away from it. Let us therefore determine whether it is time to present you, our youth, with new goals, to lay new paths into the unknown.¹⁵

Similar ideas, but with much more pronounced racist and imperialist undertones, were expressed one year later by Austrian author and mountaineer Sepp Dobiasch in an article in the Viennese periodical *Der Bergsteiger: Deutsche Wochenschrift für Bergsteigen, Wandern, und Skilaufen* (*The Mountaineer: German Weekly for Mountaineering, Hiking, and Skiing*). As Dobiasch saw it, the future goals for a new generation of German mountaineers were located beyond the boundaries of Europe:

The soul of our European culture is tied to the notion of infinite space; its essence is the conquest of space. The unprecedented energy of the white race . . . drives it towards the ever more daring domination of space. The globe is almost too small for it, its desires extend beyond the reaches of the earth into outer space, and no end to this is in sight.¹⁶

In pursuing these imperialist goals, Dobiasch proclaims, Germany would finally be able to leave behind the defeat and humiliation it experienced in World War I, identify new areas of activity and influence, and once again participate in global power politics:

The strong will of a youth that has passed through the terrible school of a world war searches for new territory. It longs for and dreams of new spaces.

Someone somewhere once wrote the fitting phrase: "Only when the Germans learn to think in continents rather than in villages will they begin to move forward." Well, the new youth is willing to learn this, it wants [to embark on] overseas expeditions, [travel to] new and unknown mountains, [reach] new and more distant goals, it longs for spaces where it may write its own epic tale. . . .

The world's great nations are set on conquering the last unexplored high-mountain ranges on earth. All that Germany's mountaineers can do is watch. While the English mountaineering youth . . . will settle only for the highest goals, the German youth is supposed to seek new routes in the Eastern Alps, to puzzle where on a difficult face with ten routes an eleventh or twelfth one is still possible, to continue to dream while others are acting and achieving.

The German people have overcome their most difficult time; their unbroken vitality once again conquers the space in which they can act, their activities once again influence important world affairs, and their energy once again aids in building the future of humanity. German mountaineering, too, has a right to participate in the future exploration of overseas mountain ranges.¹⁷

Dobiasch identifies Germany's greatest challenge in catching up with the British not only in pure mountaineering terms but also, and more importantly, in terms of concrete

political influence, i.e. the global projection of power. These imperialist intentions were recognized and criticized the very same year by the Austrian sociologist Dr. Karl Ziak who, in reflecting upon the political dimension of global mountaineering enterprises, confirmed their link to imperialist dreams and identified these dreams not only as a British but also very much as a German phenomenon:

The mercenary spirit of English imperialism, ill-reputed in Germany and nevertheless copied by it, set out to win the "Blue Ribbon of the Alps" in very much the same way it had conquered its colonies. Once this honorable task had been achieved in Europe, it searched for new territories to be subjugated. . . .

Have any of our present historians observed how the competition between English and German imperialism, which intensified before the turn of the century, manifested itself already a decade earlier in the mountains . . . ?

For bourgeois society this alpinism of the first phase . . . means the conquest of new territory, a form of imperialism manifesting itself today in the struggle for Tschomolungma [Mount Everest].¹⁸

The true motivation behind German expeditions into the high-mountain regions of the world was confirmed in 1928 by Julius Gallhuber, owner and editor of the magazine *Der Bergsteiger* (*The Mountaineer*), in a comment on the German Andes and Pamir expeditions of the same year. In Gallhuber's mind, expeditions of this nature were a key ingredient in the process of German national renewal:

It is our view that expeditions are not carried out in order to provide their select members with a romantic vacation, and to aid them in gaining fame that they may use to their business advantage or in order to satisfy their personal ambitions; the value and meaning of expeditions are of a different kind. They are an impressive step towards once again elevating the German people to their former greatness and standing, since the secret of German power has been and will be German action!

These expeditions shall serve as one more tool to regain our trust in German power, in our self-confidence, to strengthen our reputation in foreign countries.¹⁹

The 1920s, then, through their preoccupation with rebuilding a German national identity in the aftermath of World War I, served as a rhetorical staging area for future actions designed to achieve that goal. In German and Austrian mountaineering circles, this preoccupation generated repeated programmatic calls for a German involvement in the field of high-altitude mountaineering, an activity perceived to lead the nation back to an equal standing with its former adversaries and to subsequently open the door to not only a symbolic, but a very real, status as a European and, in some minds, even world power. In this scheme, mountaineering was not simply a sport like any other. Characterized by the existential struggle of man versus nature on one hand and nation against nation on the other, it symbolically re-staged the battles of World War I in order to rewrite them, thereby becoming an almost ideal incubator for already existing social currents such as nationalism, imperialism, militarism, and racism. Helmut Zebhauser recently noted in regard to this first decade after the war:

[German alpinism] became entangled in the web of political constellations. *Völkisch* tendencies, grand airs of a master race, visions of a German empire, a racially pure German-ness, of Aryanism and *Heimat* permeated society and

were disseminated through literature, art, and clubs. The [German] Alpine Club and its statutes came under the influence of Anti-Semitism. Geopolitics was recruited for the purpose of imperialism. The competitive attitude of sport, the ideal of the close-knit group became intermixed with notions of trench comradeship and nationalistic revisionism. . . . Notions of courage and hardening, mountaineering and drill became synonymous and were connected to the preparation for war. Heroism on the mountain and soldierly qualities on the battlefield grew on the same tree.

[German] Alpinism stepped on the slippery slope towards fascist society. We have to understand clearly that anti-democratic, anti-Semitic, *völkisch*, nationalistic, revisionist, and militaristic attitudes (which the leadership of the *Deutscher und Österreichischer Alpenverein* [DÖAV; German and Austrian Alpine Club] shared with the majority of the German administrative, judicial, entrepreneurial, ecclesiastical, medical, and scientific elite) were essential historical prerequisites for Hitler's rise to power."²⁰

Zebhauser's assessment of the politicization and radicalization of German alpinism during the 1920s is reinforced by Rainer Amstädter in his groundbreaking study of the interrelationship between German and Austrian alpinism and National Socialism. After tracing the development of the above-mentioned currents—nationalism, imperialism, militarism, and racism—through the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries and investigating their respective role within German and Austrian alpine organizations, Amstädter concludes:

After 1918, German nationalist, anti-socialist, and anti-Semitic tendencies within the bourgeois alpine organizations actively support the rise of National Socialism. . . . Having successfully broken through the cultural pessimism and discouragement of the 1920s, bourgeois alpinism becomes a means to an end in regard to the "higher development" of the German *Volk*. The appropriation of alpinism as a means for pre-military training and its integration into the German philosophy of the will lead to its voluntary utilization of the political structures of National Socialism. . . . The . . . physical culture of German and Austrian alpinism has an active role in influencing the social evolution of [German] industrial civilization all the way from pre-war alpinism through the interwar years to National Socialism. The directional changes in mountaineering are conditioned socially and politically and reflect larger sociological patterns. German and Austrian alpinism, in turn, through the active participation of its alpine organizations in war, contributes decisively to the shift within German society towards National Socialism.²¹

It is this ideological overlap between German and Austrian alpine organizations and the National Socialist movement—the "special affinity between alpinism and National Socialism"²² already prior to 1933—that would make the sport of mountaineering so attractive to those who would be charged with propagating a political movement that had laid its ideological foundations during the very decade German mountaineers pondered their plans for the future.

Germany's "Mountain of Destiny": Nanga Parbat

As if yielding to the growing chorus of voices calling for an engagement beyond their traditional area of activity in the European Alps, German alpine organizations soon launched

a series of expeditions to various high-mountain regions around the globe; a frenzied engagement that would end only with the outbreak of World War II in 1939.²³ From these activities, it was the region of the Himalayas that eventually emerged as the ultimate goal for German expeditions during the 1930s. In 1929 the Munich notary and mountaineer Paul Bauer had organized the first German Himalaya expedition to Kangchendzönga (8,598m), the third-tallest mountain in the world. In 1930, the "Internationale Himalaya-Expedition," organized and led by Prof. Dr. Günther Oskar Dyhrenfurth,²⁴ set out to conquer Kangchendzönga once more but, like Bauer the previous year, failed to reach the summit. Kangchendzönga remained one of the primary goals for German mountaineers during the early 1930s: 1931 marked the year of the second German Kangchendzönga expedition, again under the leadership of Paul Bauer. However, in the dreams of German mountaineers at the time, Kangchendzönga was soon replaced by Nanga Parbat (8,125m), the world's ninth-tallest peak.

Germany's "claim" to this mountain can be traced all the way back to the mid-nineteenth century. In September 1854, the three explorers (and brothers) Hermann, Adolph and Robert Schlagintweit embarked on an expedition jointly sponsored by the Prussian King Friedrich Wilhelm IV and the British East India Company with the purpose of completing the "Magnetic Survey of India." It was during one of their repeat—sometimes joint, sometimes individual—ventures into the high regions of Kashmir, Ladakh, and Baltistan that Adolph Schlagintweit, during the month of September of 1856, came face to face with Nanga Parbat. Although Schlagintweit was to be tragically killed a year later during a period of civil unrest in Turkestan, part of his scientific measurements and drawings, including a panorama of Nanga Parbat, reached the West.²⁵

The fact that Nanga Parbat was "discovered" by a German undoubtedly contributed to the claim by German mountaineers of the 1930s that Nanga Parbat was a "German" mountain. Paul Bauer, for instance, head of the *Fachamt für Bergsteigen und Wandern im deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* (Department of Mountaineering and Hiking in the German Reichsbund for Physical Education)²⁶ from 1934 to 1938 and leader of two expeditions to Nanga Parbat (1937 and 1938), repeatedly referred to Adolph Schlagintweit as being the first European paying attention to the mountain and sending news of its existence to Europe. To him, Adolph Schlagintweit was the true "Entdecker" (discoverer)²⁷ of Nanga Parbat.

Nanga Parbat came into close focus for German mountaineers in 1932. During that year, a joint German-American expedition led by Willy Merkl, one of the premier German climbers at the time, and bankrolled primarily by two American participants—Rand Herron and Elizabeth Knowlton—made the first (unsuccessful) German effort at scaling the peak.

Over the next seven years, until the outbreak of World War II, a total of five German expeditions would visit Nanga Parbat in addition to the 1932 Merkl expedition (expedition leaders in parentheses): 1934 (Willy Merkl), 1937 (Karlo Wien), 1937 rescue expedition (Paul Bauer), 1938 (Paul Bauer), 1939 (participants: Peter Aufschnaiter, Heinrich Harrer, Hans Lobenhoffer, Lutz Chicken). Nanga Parbat, however, did not treat its visitors kindly; in fact, it soon gained the title of German "Schicksalsberg" ("Mountain of Destiny") because of the repeat disasters striking German expeditions on its slopes and the resulting high body count of altogether eleven German mountaineers, among them some

of the most highly regarded climbers of the interwar period. Nanga Parbat became associated with death; a connection that Paul Bauer would later evoke already in regard to Adolph Schlagintweit: "One is overcome by the fear of an unknown destiny surrounding Nanga Parbat upon learning that already the first person dealing with the mountain had met an unusual death."²⁸

Disaster struck first with the 1934 expedition. Financed through and executed with support from German National Socialist government agencies—the majority of funds were raised through the *Reichsbahn-Turn- und Sportvereine* (Gymnastics and Sports Clubs of the German National Railways) and the *DÖAV*—nothing less was expected of this expedition than the "conquest of the summit for the glory of Germany."²⁹ That goal, however, would not be reached. Early on during the expedition, one of the nine German mountaineers, Alfred Drexel, succumbed to lung edema. During a subsequent summit attempt, three more German mountaineers, Willy Merkl, Willo Welzenbach, and Uli Wieland, as well as three porters lost their lives. Caught in the onset of the monsoon, they failed in their attempt to descend from their high-altitude camp to lower elevations due to heavy snowfall and the effects of high-altitude sickness.

The 1937 expedition to Nanga Parbat fared even worse. Financed by the newly founded *Deutsche Himalaja-Stiftung* (German Himalaya Foundation)—an organization comprised primarily of members of the highly selective and elitist *Akademischer Alpenverein München* (Academic Alpine Club Munich) and closely connected to the National Socialist *Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* through two of its founding members, *Reichssportführer* (Reich Sports Leader) Hans von Tschammer und Osten and Paul Bauer—the expedition left Munich with great expectations and, once on the mountain, welcomed the challenges awaiting them. In his diary, Hans Hartmann, one of the participants remembered:

The entire team has moved up to Camp IV. Almost all the loads that will be needed up-front are here—the real siege, to which the mountain—unfortunately—forces us with its damned awful weather, can now begin. . . . Snow and cold—these are the weapons that Nanga [Parbat] directs against us. It deploys them much earlier and more ferociously than in 1932 and 1934—and it uses them according to laws unknown to us. We will happily accept this challenge. To us the struggle itself means more than an easy victory. We will love that mountain the most which forces us to fight the hardest!³⁰

The "weapons" the mountain had in store for them, however, proved too powerful. Almost in an instant, an avalanche leveling the very Camp IV Hartmann mentions in his diary killed seven German mountaineers and nine porters. It was with this tragic event that Nanga Parbat gained the title "Schicksalsberg."

Immediately after receiving news of the disaster, the German Himalaya Foundation launched a rescue expedition to Nanga Parbat. Its members, after several days of digging through the avalanche, would locate and lay to rest the bodies of five German mountaineers. In addition, they would retrieve most of the personal belongings of the deceased, including their diaries, as well as the film material of the original 1937 expedition.

The year 1938 saw yet another German effort at fulfilling what by then had become somewhat of a German destiny. Again led by Paul Bauer, yet another expedition traveled to Nanga Parbat to attack it once more. Although this time no one got injured or killed, death was present on the mountain nevertheless; it was this expedition that discovered the bodies of the deceased of 1934, Willy Merkl and Willo Welzenbach.

German efforts on Nanga Parbat continued in 1939. Reacting to the sobering fact that four previous expeditions had failed to reach the summit via the north side of the mountain, this visit was designed to explore a potential new route up the mountain from the east and, by doing so, lay the groundwork for a large expedition planned for the following year 1940. The outbreak of World War II, however, put an end to everyone's mountaineering dreams; the four German expedition members were soon interned by British forces in India. Not until 1953 would Germans be present at Nanga Parbat again.

"Documenting" Nanga Parbat: *Kampf um den Himalaja* (1938)

Of the five expeditions to Nanga Parbat between 1934 and 1939, four were documented on film. The first of these accounts, *Nanga Parbat: Bildbericht der Deutschen Himalaja-Expedition 1934* (*Nanga Parbat: Documentary of the German Himalaya Expedition 1934*), a 32-minute account of the ill-fated expedition, was filmed by two mountaineers, Fritz Bechtold and Peter Müllritter and edited by Frank Leberecht. It premiered on February 18 in Munich at the conclusion of the 1936 Olympic Games and, since considered to be "of high cultural and political value"³¹ by the *Reichsfilmkammer* (Reich Film Chamber), was deemed important enough to be furnished with a brief foreword by *Reichssportführer* Hans von Tschammer und Osten. It was soon to be found in wide distribution all over Germany and Austria and was brought to the attention of its audience via a centralized advertising campaign initiated by the German *Fachamt für Bergsteigen und Wandern im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* (Department of Mountaineering and Hiking in the German *Reichsbund* for Physical Education).³²

The second documentary of interest to this investigation, *Kampf um den Himalaja* (*Struggle for the Himalayas*), was filmed during the two Nanga Parbat expeditions of 1937. Consisting of footage from both the original 1937 expedition (filmed by Peter Müllritter and Günter Hepp, both killed in an avalanche) and the 1937 rescue expedition (filmed by Fritz Bechtold and Ulrich Luft), it is considerably longer than the production of 1934—82 minutes as compared to 32 minutes, in fact making it into a feature film. Produced by the German Himalaya Foundation, its post-production at Tobis Melofilm was supervised by Frank Leberecht and Franz Schröder. Like *Nanga Parbat* two years earlier, it was widely distributed in German and Austrian movie theaters. The funds generated by this film, together with money from sales of expedition books by Fritz Bechtold and Paul Bauer, were intended to be used to finance future expeditions to Nanga Parbat.

Documentary film material was also produced during the 1938 expedition to Nanga Parbat, led by Paul Bauer. This footage, however, would not make it onto German screens until after the end of World War II as part of the aforementioned production titled *Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen* (1951), a silent documentary. This project had been explored by the German Himalaya Foundation in conjunction with the *Reichsanstalt für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* (RWU; Reich Agency for Film and Image in Science and Instruction), as early as fall 1940; however, the film itself, again post-produced under the aegis of Frank Leberecht by the *Institut für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* (FWU; Institute for Film and Image in Science and Instruction), RWU's successor organization after 1945, would not be finished until 1951. Parallel to this production the foundation pursued plans to turn the material filmed during the expeditions of 1934, 1937,

NANGA PARBAT

Dieses grandiose Filmwerk berichtet vom tragischen Schicksal deutscher Helden, von deren unbeugsamen stählernen Willen, von ihrer Kameradschaft und Treue bis in den Tod

Aufgenommen von Fritz Bechtold / Bearbeitet von Frank Lebercht
Musik: Bernd Scholz Musikalische Leitung: Dr. Becce
Tonaufnahmen: Tobis-Klangfilm

Die deutschen Sahibs
Willi Merkl, Willi Welzenbach
Alfred Drexel, Uli Wieland
Fritz Bechtold, Erwin Schneider
Peter Aschenbrenner
Peter Müllritter, Willi Bernard
Hanns Hieronimus, Richard Finsterwalder
Walter Raechl, Peter Misch

Fertiggestellt und verliehen durch die
Döring-Film-Werke G.m.b.H.
Berlin NW 40, Schlieffenufer 42
Fernruf für Verleith: A 2 Flora 4046, für Sonstiges: A 2 Flora 4094/95

Advertisement for *Nanga Parbat: Bildbericht der Deutschen Himalaja-Expedition 1934* in *Illustrierter Film-Kurier*. COURTESY PRIVATE COLLECTION OF HARALD HÖBUSCH.

and 1938 in a feature-length film; this project, however, despite intense and prolonged efforts by Paul Bauer, never came to fruition.³³

All three productions, as may be gathered from the above account, are tied to each other via the person of Frank Leberecht who, in each instance, served as the individual in charge of post-production and functioned as liaison to the leadership of the German Himalaya Foundation. As his correspondence with Paul Bauer and Ulrich Cameron Luft pertaining to *Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen* during the years 1947 to 1950 reveals, Leberecht provided detailed accounts of the post-production process and routinely consulted Bauer and Luft on various artistic and business issues. This indicates that the German Himalaya Foundation was squarely in charge of the content and message of all its documentaries. Given the prominence in the foundation of members of the *Akademischer Alpenverein München* (Academic Alpine Club Munich), an organization Paul Bauer described in 1934 as having elected to side with Adolf Hitler and follow a nationalist and National Socialist course as early as 1923,³⁴ it is not surprising that *Kampf um den Himalaja*, the 1938 feature-length documentary of the ill-fated 1937 Nanga Parbat expedition, would convey a message that would play straight into the hands of the National Socialist cause.

At first glance, *Kampf um den Himalaja* seems to do nothing more than simply chronicle the events of the 1937 expedition to Nanga Parbat. This appearance, however, is deceiving. A second, closer look at the documentary reveals a highly sophisticated arrangement and interplay of image and narrative designed to celebrate—and thereby propagate, in a pseudo-religious manner—such values as "honor," "comradeship," and, ultimately, "self-sacrifice (to the death)." While some of these values may be referred to simply as common mountaineering values and may even have been shared by mountaineers from other nations, nothing during this time period is as simple as it seems. Even before the 1920s and 1930s, in Germany, these values carried with them a militaristic undertone and were, as shall soon become evident, an essential part of the vocabulary of the National Socialist movement.

The themes of comradeship, self-sacrifice, and death are present from the very beginning of *Kampf um den Himalaja*. The film opens with a brief visual reference to those killed on Nanga Parbat in 1934 and immediately continues to identify the motivation for the 1937 expedition: the legacy left behind by the deceased—"In 1934 Willy Merkl, Alfred Drexel, Willo Welzenbach, and Uli Wieland died on Nanga Parbat. In order to fulfill the legacy of our fallen comrades, a new team advanced towards the unconquered ice giant in 1937. . . ."³⁵ By subsequently listing the members of the 1937 expedition and marking the names of its deceased with crosses, the film early on establishes a type of comradeship that reaches beyond life into death. In addition, the repeated use of the term "legacy" suggests an almost legally binding contract and, if not that, at least a strong moral obligation, an honorable task to be performed. Furthermore, the use of the term "Schicksalsberg" for Nanga Parbat in this opening sequence creates religious overtones; overtones which, like the previously discussed concepts, continue throughout the narrative and combine with them to form an almost inescapable ideological web.

The religious nature of the German mission to Nanga Parbat is suggested not through the use of traditional Christian symbols but rather through several references to religious practices indigenous to the region. Twice the narrator draws a parallel between a group of pilgrims who, on their journey back from Mecca, cross the path of the expedition, and the German mountaineers who are still at the beginning of their "pilgrimage":

Kirghiz natives from Jarkande are resting around the other campfire; some of them are nearly ninety years old. We get along with them very well. Probably because we are all pilgrims; in contrast to us, they have already reached the goal of their pilgrimage: Mecca, the holy city. . . .

In the oppressive heat, the dust, and the barren landscape we long for the world of the glaciers, from where this refreshing runnel descends towards us. Our Sherpas, used to snow, seek out the cooling shade, even if they have to retreat into a crevice. Fellow travelers are passing us: the venerable Mecca pilgrims. They have been riding like this for two years—day after day—across icy mountain passes and scorching steppes, and many hardships are still awaiting them. Will they all see their homeland again?

This reference to Muslim religious practice suggest two things: Firstly, that very much like the pilgrims' trip to Mecca which, in fact, is suggested by the Koran to be embarked upon once during a lifetime, the German trip to Nanga Parbat is of a similar obligatory nature. Secondly, in addition to elevating the German mountaineers to "pilgrims" on the way to their "Schicksalsberg," it also foreshadows the fate awaiting some of the climbers. Indeed, only a few of them would return to their home country, while the majority—like those who came before them in 1934—would be killed on the mountain.

The religious nature of the German expedition is further amplified through two references to Buddhist rituals. One scene shows—and describes—the Sherpa leader Nursang greeting the rising sun with the Tibetan prayer "Om mani padme hum"; another one, shortly before the fateful ascent to Camp IV, depicts the Sherpa porters celebrating their "Schneefeier" (snow ritual):

To the luminous gods of Nanga Parbat the colorful pennants and the smoke of holy herbs shall ascend. Berries and rice are the offerings, and the splendid fellows smile at the mountain. A magnificent service! Joyful and manly and strong!

In this quotation, too, religious references are combined with qualities such as manliness and sacrifice.³⁶

Equally important regarding the overall message of the film is the relationship between the deceased of 1934 and those traveling to Nanga Parbat in 1937. Indeed, it can be argued that this message of "Vermächtnis" (legacy)—and thereby of "Verpflichtung" (obligation)—marks the very center of this documentary and not only metaphorically. Exactly halfway through the film, the members of the 1937 expedition arrive at the gravesite of Alfred Drexel, the first mountaineer to succumb during the 1934 attempt. After showing the expedition members adorning the rock pile that marks Drexel's grave with freshly cut branches, thereby commemorating their fallen comrade, the film slowly dissolves from this 1937 footage into footage from 1934, depicting the actual burial of Alfred Drexel. Against this background, we read the following words:

Three years earlier:

On June 11, 1934 we buried Alfred Drexel.

At his grave stood:

Willy Merkl †

Willo Welzenbach †

Ali Wieland †

Nanga Parbat kept them, too.

The film, then, literally revolves around death and the continuity of the mission embarked upon in 1934. This continuity is underscored by the use of a dissolve rather than a jump cut at this particular juncture.

A similar connection between the 1934 and the 1937 expedition, respectively, is employed earlier in the film. Showing a panorama and eventually a close-up of Nanga Parbat, the narrative suggests that the 1934 expedition laid the groundwork for future attempts at the mountain:

For three years, our dead comrades have been resting up there. Beyond their high grave we shall proceed towards the main summit onto which we focus our energy and our longing. Hans Hartmann writes into his diary: "All my thoughts are with our mountain. Today I have seen the summit of Nanga Parbat. It is alive in me."

This notion of continuity between the two German missions to Nanga Parbat is played up twice more. While looking for a possible campsite in order to move the Base Camp higher up on the mountain, the Sherpas lead the German mountaineers to the site of the 1934 Base Camp. The narrative indicates that this is where the current new Base Camp will be erected:

We decide to place the main camp higher up on the mountain and discover a snow-free site in a depression on the moraine. One gets the impression that the old Sherpa porters are at home on Nanga [Parbat]. They can still locate the Main Campsite from three years ago, and it is here that Günter Hepp and Karlo Wien find some old wooden boards. The writing has faded: *DHE 1934—Deutsche Himalaja-Expedition 1934*. With the remains of the old Main Camp we begin to build a new one, without waiting for our tools to arrive.

The use of wooden planks left over from the 1934 expedition highlights that the 1937 expedition is literally built upon the foundation of those who labored before—and lost their lives in that effort.

Finally, at the very end of the film, the camera once more shows us Nanga Parbat and, against this background, inserts the names of those who succumbed in 1937 and the following sentence: "Ascended into Nanga Parbat: An immortal symbol of eternal desire and manly deed." The last shot, however, positions the memorial for the deceased of 1934 directly in front of Nanga Parbat, the resting place of those killed in 1937. This final visual connection establishes irrefutably that which had been suggested throughout the film: the continuity between the 1934 and 1937 expeditions and, via extension, any future ones. Like in 1934, lives were lost in 1937, thereby creating a new "Vermächtnis," a new legacy for those who would follow. Some indeed followed the very same year, again driven by the obligation to those who lost their lives on the mountain:

The glacier looked completely different. Gigantic ice falls and new, gaping crevasses had rendered the old ascent impassable. Nevertheless: We had to get up there.

Ultimately, the film itself becomes an extension of the obligation extending from the original 1934 expedition via the ill-fated 1937 attempt to the present. Again, it is the term "Vermächtnis" that calls to duty not only the survivors but also those of a new generation of German mountaineers. Part of that duty, it is implied, is to tell the story of the fight and ultimately the defeat at Nanga Parbat:

We buried our fallen comrades at the base of a gigantic block of ice. We retrieved as their legacy the film images that give testament of their struggle, the scientific reports, and the diaries. In them, the journey of our team was alive from the first day to the last.

By depicting the 1937 expedition to Nanga Parbat as a sort of pilgrimage and thereby providing it with religious overtones, *Kampf um den Himalaja* relies heavily on a strategy that had characterized the National Socialist movement from its very beginning. The 1920 program of the Nazi party (the so-called "25 points"), for instance, would later be characterized by Hitler as the "founding document of our religion, our world view,"³⁷ thereby reflecting the intention of the Nazis to portray their movement in a religious light.³⁸ This intention manifested itself, among others, in the phenomenon of the National Socialist "Totenkult" (cult of death), the mystification of those who had given their lives for the movement. This economy of death, as Jay W. Baird has documented, can be traced all the way back to the death myth of World War I and is connected to such events as the "martyrdom" of Albert Leo Schlageter, the saga of Horst Wessel and, above all, the "Immortals" of the abortive Hitler *putsch* of November 9, 1923.³⁹ Several of these "martyrs" had been immortalized in films: the early fighters in *Hitlerjunge Quex* (*Hitler Youth Quex*; 1933), Horst Wessel in *Hans Westmar* (1933). Elevating the death of eleven German mountaineers on Nanga Parbat to the level of national martyrdom in *Kampf um den Himalaja* fits squarely into this economy of death and its continuing need for symbolic figures.

This is underscored by the fact that the German alpine leadership at the time was quick to cast the two subsequent disasters of 1934 and 1937 in a glorifying light, stressing the sacrificial nature of the altogether eleven dead and turning the deceased mountaineers into national heroes who had given their lives for the greater good of the German people.⁴⁰ The *Österreichische Alpenzeitung* wrote in response to the 1934 incident:

In all our grief, all our pain only one consolation remains: To view the meaning of this tragic death—shortly before reaching the goal—in a larger context, and to sum up the sacrifice, the comradeship, and the loyalty to an idea in these words: "A people with sons like these cannot fail!"⁴¹

Similar interpretations dominated the media when Germany learned about the fate of the 1937 expedition. Julius Trumpp, for instance, editor of the official *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Bergsteigerverbandes im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* (Bulletin of the German Mountaineering Organization in the German *Reichsbund* for Physical Education), wrote:

From distant India we have received shattering news. The third German expedition to Nanga Parbat has been hit by a major disaster. Seven members of both the advance team and the main party, while staying in Camp IV at 6,185 m and waiting for the weather to improve, have been buried by an avalanche together with nine porters. . . .

Again the weapons of the mountain have proven stronger than those of its attackers. The German mountaineers, the German people, and with them the world grieve the loss of these experienced and able comrades. . . . With high spirits they set out to fulfill Willy Merkl's legacy. This group, hardened in battle, did not lack in will power when, together with their loyal porters, it was surprised by the raging forces of nature. . . .

Grief therefore overshadows the unfortunate outcome of this year's expedition, but even in this difficult hour we can't help but to identify the deeper

meaning of this sacrificial death as the heroic and loyal fulfillment of one's duty in a forward position and as a symbol of a great patriotic task.⁴²

Reichssportführer Hans von Tschammer und Osten, who had already evoked the words of the German World War I poet Walter Flex during a memorial service in November of 1934 for those who succumbed in 1934, resorted to the same lines when he remembered the deceased of 1937 at a memorial service of the *Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* (German *Reichsbund* for Physical Education) at the *UFA* film palace in Berlin in December of 1937, stressing the "will to sacrifice [one's life] for the idea of the Himalaya"⁴³ among the dead German mountaineers and once more linking individual tragedy to the fate of the German people at large:

What is suffering to me—
I am bound by an oath,
that glows like fire
through sword and heart and hands.
Let it end the way it ends—
Germany, I am prepared.⁴⁴

Prepared, that is, for war, as Meinhart Sild, personal assistant to the "Führer des *DAV* (Deutscher Alpenverein)" (Leader of the German Alpine Club) Dr. Arthur Seyß-Inquart, would soon make clear in two essays appearing in the *Österreichische Alpenzeitung* in 1938 and 1939, respectively. Highlighting a sentiment present among German and Austrian mountaineers ever since the end of World War I, he officially establishes a connection between mountaineering and armed conflict.⁴⁵ In "Bergsteigen als Rüstung" ("Mountaineering as a Form of Mobilization"; 1938),⁴⁶ Sild wrote:

In this event of global importance, which, with the words of Ernst Jünger, we call "total mobilization," the act of mountaineering as a form of battle and the mountaineer as a manifestation of the warrior play a special and enlightening role. . . .

In as far as the mountaineer is a manifestation of the warrior, mountaineering is part and means of total mobilization. To recognize this is to connect it to a higher reality. This connection is a necessary one; this necessity flows from the nature of total mobilization, and mountaineering is therefore not a trivial, but rather an essential part of this act. . . .

The military standards, orders, and laws that manifest themselves in the act of total mobilization are equally valid in regard to mountaineering: . . .Comrade- and leadership, a sense of duty and responsibility, initiative and decisiveness, discipline, toughness, courage, bravery—: all these qualities together form a foundation essential not only for the typical attitude of the warrior and mountaineer, but increasingly also for a new, all-encompassing affirmation of life.⁴⁷

One year later, in "Bergsteigen—Notwendigkeit und Aufgabe" ("Mountaineering—Necessity and Task"), Sild would elaborate on this relationship and finally condense it into eight theses:

1. Mountaineering experienced a fundamental change by evolving from a form of protest against the bourgeois world into a part of the attack against it.
2. In order to fulfill the ideologically motivated, central task of increasing the value of life through education (in the sense of selective adaptation), National Socialism primarily employs the various manifestations of fight and therefore also of mountaineering.

3. Consequently, mountaineering is both task and necessity.
4. Mountaineering—from an ideological point of view—results both in an intensification of life and a form of selection; from a political point of view, it hones both community and leadership qualities. It is an educational tool of the first order;
5. Its application [is] the task of both the German Alpine Club and all segments of the party.
6. This calls for a close and productive collaboration between these two entities;
7. And the preeminence of mountaineering, ideological, and political issues in the German Alpine Club.
8. The effectiveness of mountaineering as a means of ideological and political education as well as its future depend on the successful completion of these tasks.⁴⁸

This particular dimension of *Kampf um den Himalaja* comes into even sharper focus when we shift our attention from the general context of National Socialist ideology to the films released in 1937 and 1938, the latter year seeing the premiere of *Kampf*. Movie audiences during this time were treated to, among others, four pictures by Karl Ritter who, according to Jay W. Baird, with his World War I trilogy—*Patrioten (Patriots)*, *Unternehmen Michael (Operation Michael)*, *Urlaub auf Ehrenwort (Leave on Parole)* and *Pour le Mérite*—"schooled an entire generation of youth in the beauty of war," thereby reflecting "the increasing belligerence of Germany in the years just before the outbreak of World War II."⁴⁹ The ideals of battle, honor, self-sacrifice, and death celebrated in these films prepared the viewer for the language used in *Kampf um den Himalaja*. Furthermore, Ritter's characteristic cinematic language, the *Zeitfilm* (a film that attains coherence through a cinematic telegram style, that is episodic in nature, and that does not employ individual character development) resulted in what one might call a "theatrical documentary film." With this, however, it is not that far removed from what viewers would encounter in *Kampf um den Himalaja* where authentic documentary material was subjugated to an ideological super-structure highlighting a persistent attitude among German mountaineers ever since the end of World War I, thereby becoming a "Nazi organ, a party organ."⁵⁰

This assessment is further substantiated by the film's use of the quintessential emblem of National Socialism, the swastika. Emerging three times throughout the film, it reinforces some of the key ideological messages of the Nazi movement.

In the first instance, we observe several expedition members singing aboard their ship en route to Bombay, from whence they will continue their journey to the Himalayas by train. They are not introduced by name but rather, since grouped under a waving flag carrying the swastika, as nameless representatives of the German National Socialist state. It is only later that we formally learn their identity. From the very beginning of the film, then, it is clear that this is an enterprise sponsored by National Socialist Germany and therefore an endeavor larger than any participating individual.

It is in the second half of the film that we encounter the swastika for the second time. The context here is a snowstorm created by an avalanche that leveled one of the high camps. While showing the flattened tents with their attached little flags, the narrative refers to a "successfully weathered crisis," thereby implying the notion of the protective power of National Socialism even under adverse circumstances.

The third time this preeminent symbol of National Socialism appears in this documentary is in connection with a dramatic sequence dominated by shots of Nanga Parbat, moving clouds, and blowing snow—in various combinations. In the middle of this sequence, we are shown a tent against the background of both Nanga Parbat and a swastika flag, the latter dominating about one-third of the frame. The accompanying narrative goes as follows:

Finally, on June 14, a clear morning dawns. The thermometer shows 21 degrees below zero. But what does this mean compared to the newly arisen hope for victory. It is reflected in everything our comrades have written about this day. In Martin Pfeffer's diary we read on the last page: "Today we are able to sit in the warm sun for the first time, and Lieutenant Smart, together with those porters suffering from altitude sickness, descends to the Main Camp. Nine Sherpas are staying with us. They all know what the push for the summit will demand of them, but none of them wants to stay behind. They are called 'Himalayan Tigers' for a good reason." And we continue to read in Martin Pfeffer's diary: "I break a path towards a gap in the main ridge. Fog seems to boil over the ridge and is blown around by the wind. But soon the fog lifts. We are full of spirits, since tomorrow we will attack the summit. Perhaps we will conquer the summit on Hartmann's birthday. Illuminated by the setting sun the storm drives sheets of snow over Nanga [Parbat] . . . I am very lucky to be able to see all these beautiful sights."

The connection, then, created in this sequence through the interplay between image and narrative is that between National Socialism and notions such as gratitude, optimism, attack and, ultimately, victory. It is at this point that the film symbolically suggest the fulfillment of a dream German mountaineers had carried with them ever since the end of World War I: Germany's reemergence as a great and powerful nation.

Nanga Parbat's Visual Afterlife: *Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen* (1951)

Given the specific nature of *Kampf um den Himalaja* and its appropriation for National Socialist propaganda purposes, it is both surprising and disturbing to find that the film continued to be screened in German movie theaters even after 1945;⁵¹ a form of afterlife that at least one German citizen found problematic enough to inform the *Bayerisches Landesamt für Vermögensverwaltung* (Bavarian Office of Property Administration) about the National Socialist ties of the German Himalaya Foundation and its involvement in the production of the film:

Several groups of young mountaineers have informed us that movie theaters in various West German cities are screening the *Filmchronik der deutschen Nanga-Parbat Expedition 1937* (i.e., *Struggle for the Himalayas*). During the time of the Third Reich, this film of the tragic and catastrophic expedition, upon the initiative of the former leader [of the German Alpine Club] Paul Bauer, was used for propagandistic purposes in such a way that it yielded financial benefits, but did a disservice to both the deceased and all German mountaineers.

Since this film was produced with financial support provided by the Himalaya foundation, and since this foundation, during the National Socialist period, was under the control of the former *Reichssportführer* Tschammer-Osten and guided by the former deputy leader of the German Alpine Club, Paul Bauer, we would like to inquire whether the German Alpine Club has registered this film in accordance with the stipulations of the Allied Control Council.⁵²

For individuals close to the German Himalaya Foundation, however, this continued presence of *Kampf um den Himalaja* on German screens did not seem to pose any problems. As Dr. Alfred Holl, general council for the foundation, would write in his response to the above accusation:

Consequently, "today's alpine youth" would like to remove this film as an "improper means of propaganda" from the general public. This would be some kind of democracy! If anything is indeed "improper" with the [German Himalaya] foundation, then this is not the business of this so-called "alpine youth," but rather the task of the government of Upper Bavaria to deal with this situation.⁵³

Holl's response reflects a strategy that tries to protect the legacy of German Himalaya expeditions (in this case ironically with the help of key democratic principles) by rejecting any accusation that identifies the German Himalaya Foundation as a National Socialist organization and connects its activities and products, especially its documentary films, to National Socialist propaganda efforts. It is this (self-)deceptive stance that characterizes the continuing efforts of the foundation during these years to market its expedition footage in a newly democratic Germany.

Although the goal of a feature-length film never materialized—Paul Bauer had attempted to produce such a film about the 1938 Nanga Parbat expedition as late as spring 1945 and continued to pursue a feature-length release of the combined 1934, 1937, and 1938 footage even after the defeat of Nazi Germany—Bauer was firmly set on keeping alive the legacy of the German Himalaya Foundation and its expeditions to Nanga Parbat. In 1951, he finally succeeded, although on a smaller scale than originally planned. After producing a slide show on the Himalayas for the Munich *Institut für den Unterrichtsfilm (IdfU)* in August of 1949, Bauer, now in collaboration with the newly formed *FWU*,⁵⁴ was able to combine the footage from the four Nanga Parbat expeditions conducted during National Socialist rule into a *FWU* production titled *Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen*, a silent documentary consisting of three parts of twelve, ten, and eleven minutes, respectively.⁵⁵ The film is still listed in *FWU*'s general catalogue today.⁵⁶

In an information sheet accompanying the documentary, Bauer provides a brief synopsis of the film. He begins his account with a brief introduction to Himalaya mountaineering in general, highlighting the British efforts on Mount Everest in 1921, 1923, and 1924. He then focuses on the German Himalaya expeditions, describing the efforts on Kangchendzönga (1929, 1931) and Nanga Parbat (1932, 1934, 1937, 1938). The second part of his written introduction briefly outlines the structure of the 1951 documentary: 1937 expedition, flashback to 1934 expedition, 1937 expedition, 1937 rescue expedition, 1938 expedition. At no point, however, does Bauer's description refer to the role (and importance) of these expeditions and the two resulting documentaries, *Nanga Parbat* (1936) and *Kampf um den Himalaja* (1938) within the context of National Socialist propaganda efforts nor does it mention the organizational support provided by the German Himalaya Foundation for these endeavours. Conveniently absent also is any reference to Bauer's own previous National Socialist ties and his role within German sports organizations as leader of the *Fachamt für Bergsteigen und Wandern im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* from 1934 to 1938.

If from Bauer's synopsis we get the impression that this documentary is an attempt to free German Himalaya expeditions and, by extension, the German Himalaya Foundation from National Socialist contamination, thereby preserving their legacy for a newly (democratic) future,⁵⁷ our impression is soon confirmed by the film itself, especially the structure of its narrative as conceived by Frank Leberecht. In the absence of sound and therefore an audible guide to the moving images, orientation for the viewer is provided via intertitles that occur throughout the documentary. It is from these intertitles that we are able to identify the exact narrative structure of the film as presented in the following overview:

Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen

PART 1 (12 min.)

1937 Expedition

IT=Intertitle

- IT 1 "A first view of the goal"
- IT 2 "The Indus valley at the base of the Nanga Parbat massif"
- IT 3 "The surviving porters of the 1934 expedition"

1934 Expedition (flashback)

- IT 4 "Three years ago the first comrade died"
- IT 5 "And those who buried him found their own grave in a snowstorm"

1937 Expedition (cont.)

- IT 6 "An advance party in the icefall"
- IT 7 "Snow dust covers camp II"
- IT 8 "The morning before the lead party's departure"
- IT 9 "See you in Camp IV"
- IT 10 "But they didn't return; the mountain kept them"

PART 2 (10 min.)

1937 Rescue Expedition

- IT 1 "The rescue party. At the site of the avalanche - Camp IV, 6,200m"
- IT 2 "After five days: the first discovery"
- IT 3 "A mountaineer's grave"

1938 Expedition

- IT 4 "One year later: new men in the icefall"
- IT 5 "Supplies reach Camp II"
- IT 6 "Porters descend towards Base Camp"
- IT 7 "The lead party sets up Camp IV"
- IT 8 "Onset of the monsoon ... it snows for days on end ..."

(continued)

PART 3 (11 min.)

1938 Expedition

- IT 1 "Mail for the Base Camp"
- IT 2 "Approach to Camp IV! Ready for airdrop!"
- IT 3 "Airdrop"
- IT 4 "Radio message from the plane: 'We'll check out the summit!'"
- IT 5 "Help from below"
- IT 6 "Towards Camp V (6,700 m)
Barometric pressure: a third of the normal
Temperature: -30 degrees Celsius"
- IT 7 "In the Rakhiot ice face"
- IT 8 "A look back from an elevation of 7,000 m"
- IT 9 "The summit seems possible: but ominous clouds are moving in . . ."
- IT 10 "Monsoon forces expedition to retreat shortly before reaching its goal"
- IT 11 "But the goal remains"

The intertitles amount to what would best be called a "narrative of continuity." A look at the first and the last intertitle immediately reveals that "das Ziel" (the goal) of reaching the summit of Nanga Parbat is still out there, that it is the same for today's mountaineers as it was for those almost two decades earlier. Furthermore, this sense of continuity is supported by the increasing gain of altitude by subsequent expeditions; the three references to altitude read 6,200m, 6,700m and 7,000m, respectively, implying that any future expedition can only push beyond the most recently achieved mark. Equally important is the fact that this narrative structure makes the 1951 audience part of a double act of remembrance, binding it to the still ongoing challenge to reach the summit of Nanga Parbat. Not only does the film, after its opening scenes from the original 1937 expedition, cut back to footage from the ill-fated 1934 expedition, thereby performing an act of remembrance, but it is in-and-by itself such an act of remembrance by bringing to the audience's attention the history (and legacy) of four previous German Himalaya expeditions. Furthermore, with this narrative arrangement the 1951 documentary mimics the overall structure of *Kampf um den Himalaya*, thereby creating yet another kind of continuity. Finally, while the first half of this documentary looks backward at the unsuccessful past (1934, 1937), the second half, with its attention on the almost successful 1938 expedition, looks forward, thereby pointing in the direction of future expeditions—and, potentially, future success—on Nanga Parbat.

While the documentary strives hard to establish a link between past and future German Himalaya expeditions (and thereby guarantee one kind of continuity), it very much avoids suggesting another. At no point in the narrative provided by the intertitles does the viewer find any reference to the fact that all four of these expeditions were undertaken with the financial support of National Socialist government agencies and that the resulting documentaries that provided part of the footage for the current *Lehrfilm* (instructional film) were used to disseminate a "Lehre," an instruction or message, of a very different

kind—that of superior German strength, will, and, ultimately, self-sacrifice (to the death). A critical assessment of previous German Himalaya expeditions (and their documentaries) is completely absent.⁵⁸ This "failure" to create a truly educational film for a new generation of young Germans was paradoxically facilitated by the British and American military governments and their control of all public media and institutions.⁵⁹ The film footage, whether taken from the original 1934, 1937, or 1938 reels, at no point depicts any of the visual references to National Socialism that were indeed present on the mountain. As we can see not only in the original documentaries but also in the various still pictures published as part of several printed accounts of these expeditions, the expeditions did fly the flag of the National Socialist state over their camps and, in the case of Alfred Drexel, the first victim during the 1934 expedition, did even drape his body in the swastika flag at his makeshift funeral.⁶⁰

With this characteristic denazification of its burdened past, *Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen* adheres to—at least on the surface—a policy that after 1945 governed the use of instructional media in general and the use of former *RWU* stock in particular. Since both the British and American occupation governments had permitted the rebirth of instructional media centers in their respective zones shortly after the end of the war (British zone: Dec. 12, 1945, Hanover, from April 10, 1946, Hamburg, *Institut für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Unterricht*; American zone: Feb. 5, 1946, Munich, *Institut für den Unterrichtsfilm*), and since these centers had adopted the holdings of *RWU*, the need arose for "cleansing" the inherited material as mandated by the British and American military government. According to German media historian Michael Kühn, this cleansing entailed the two steps of identification and removal of blatantly propagandistic and militaristic productions as well as the removal of National Socialist symbols from films otherwise accepted for continued use.⁶¹

In the mind of Fridolin Schmid, then director of the Hamburg *FWU*, this process was completed in 1948; the film stock had been "cleansed uniformly and reliably."⁶² That this was not necessarily the case, however, can be seen by the fact that of the 317 films designated for use in general education only 15% were withdrawn from circulation and only 10% were reedited, meaning that 75% of this particular stock reached circulation in its original *RWU* form. Overall, the majority of *RWU* stock transferred into *FWU* stock was left untouched and continued to be distributed to schools and other educational institutions into the 1960s. For critics, this practice points towards the lack of a "critical reflection upon one's own past"⁶³ within *FWU*. In the context of our investigation, these tendencies show *FWU* as an almost ideal forum for the German Himalaya Foundation's efforts at publicizing the efforts of previous German Himalaya expeditions, especially since leading figures of the former *RWU* had smoothly moved into key positions at *FWU*.⁶⁴ Furthermore, the fact that *Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen* was now part of the official *FWU* stock meant that it would be available for screening in, among other places, public schools, thereby communicating its message to a highly malleable segment of society. In-and-by itself a questionable strategy, this becomes even more problematic when we realize that the 1936 production *Nanga Parbat: Bildbericht der Deutschen Himalaja-Expedition 1934* had at least partially been targeted at this very audience. As Julius Trumpp wrote in 1936 in the *Mitteilungen des Fachamtes [für Bergsteigen und Wandern] im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* :

Since Germany's youth ought to be inspired by these mountaineers as symbols of bold daring and solemn fulfillment of duty, we have to assure that this very youth is given the opportunity to view this film and to benefit from its images of unadulterated, wild nature. This culture film will most certainly allow one to understand which great virtues, in the face of danger, make the mountaineer and may serve as a preparation for more serious tasks; tasks the fatherland may ask from such a hard race.⁶⁵

This practice of continually exposing a new generation of Germans to "old" ideas through educational films during the 1950s and 1960s is further evinced by Herbert Stettner's analysis of the selection practices of *FSK* (*Freiwillige Selbstkontrolle*), the central film censorship agency for West Germany, established by the Allies in 1949. Regarded by some as "a highly effective institutional combination of state and monopolist capital for the purpose of suppressing the production and distribution of progressive films and of furthering the militaristic and anti-democratic ideas of a re-awakened German imperialism and film politic,"⁶⁶ Stettner criticizes the selection practices of *FSK*:

Films which help us understand our past are withdrawn from elementary education while propagandistic pieces, intended to militarize our youth, are readily available to elementary school students. Has *FSK* adapted to the opinions of our ruling circles so obediently that these circles won't even have to propagate the formation of a state censorship agency?⁶⁷

Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen may indeed have been one of these "propagandistic pieces" Stettner had in mind. With its intentional foregrounding of one kind of continuity, combined with the partly intentional, partly mandated absence of another, it belies the true nature of the German pre-World War II expeditions to Nanga Parbat and their resulting film footage, forcing the unsuspecting post-World War II viewer into a position of unquestioned acceptance that might not otherwise have been possible. Any depiction or mentioning of the National Socialist context of these three expeditions might have predisposed this audience to approach a screening of the 1951 documentary with at least some degree of reservation. As it stands, however, the 1951 documentary is a successful vehicle to rescue an important part of German mountaineering history into a new era, an act of reclamation of the past in a moment of reconstitution of both German mountaineering and the German nation.⁶⁸

Combining Eric Rentschler's observations about the afterlife of Nazi feature films and our analysis of the afterlife of Nazi mountain documentaries, we realize that in the search for "viable legacies"—whether in the immediate post-World War II years (as I intended to show here) or the years following German reunification in 1989—National Socialist productions form a critical point of reference. Furthermore, in this continuing search for "overarching commonalities," several strategies are employed that cross the boundaries between both genres. The approach to Nazi feature films, as Rentschler has pointed out, is often characterized by a selective recasting of the movie in a sentimental or, at best, aesthetic context, thereby ignoring its political connections and implications; an assessment supported by Rapp in his recent analysis of the German *Bergfilm* (mountain film). A questionable segment of Germany's cinematic past, then, is appropriated via the unreflected and uncritical *continuity* of the image. The same phenomenon briefly characterized the use of *Kampf um den Himalaja* (1938); the documentary, as we have seen, would continue to be exhibited even after the collapse of the Third Reich.

This *continuity* of the image is complemented by another strategy: the selective *discontinuity* of the image. As the example of *Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen* (1951) shows, the selective use of footage from several expeditions conducted and two documentaries produced under Nazi rule in this *FWU* film results in a narrative of continuity stripped of the National Socialist connotations of the 1934, 1937, and 1938 Nanga Parbat expeditions; the available legacy of German mountaineering is the result of a selective *discontinuity* of the image. This alternative strategy, however, is not limited to the documentary genre as is evinced by Leni Riefenstahl's 1951 reediting of *Das Blaue Licht* (*The Blue Light*, 1932). Driven by a self-understanding that "denies her role in history and declares that her endeavors stand outside of time,"⁶⁹ Riefenstahl, by removing the original frame of the film (prologue and coda), "created a melancholy tale addressed to a timeless present."⁷⁰ By discontinuing select sequences of her original feature, she essentially removes her work from a pre-fascist context and, paradoxically, creates her personal continuity as an "unknowing and innocent artist."⁷¹

This formidable editing of a troubled German cinematic past for personal or political purposes is therefore not limited to a specific phase in German history. Nor is it limited to Germany as a country. As the example of yet another film about a German expedition to Nanga Parbat shows, even modern filmmakers are not immune to such a selective treatment of history. A case in point: Jean-Jacques Annaud's *Seven Years in Tibet* (1997), a movie (based on Heinrich Harrer's book by the same title) telling the story of a German mountaineer on the 1939 expedition to Nanga Parbat and his chance encounter with the young Dalai Lama. What makes this story troublesome is what it does not show (or tell) the viewer. As the Swiss edition of the socialist weekly *Vorwärts* observed in its review:

What this trivializing kitsch ignores is, firstly, Harrer's membership in the *SS* and *SA* and, secondly, the connection between German alpinism and the Third Reich. To this day, Harrer tends to downplay his *SS* membership. But the Austrian Harrer was a *NSDAP* [National Socialist Workers' Party of Germany] member even before Austria became part of the *Reich*. In the same vein he proclaims that his first ascent of the Eiger north face was not for the Nazis, but simply for the joy of mountaineering. But this was not so. For [Fritz] Kasperek, a member of Harrer's climbing party, this first ascent was "a symbol of German destiny." After the successful ascent Harrer placed a Nazi flag on the summit and thanked the Führer: "We climbed the Eiger north face beyond the summit—until we reached our Führer."

These are not innocent mountaineers who were misused by the Nazis, as they now try to make us believe. Rather, alpinism played an important part in the National Socialist ideology. During the 1930s the race began for the last great mountaineering challenges. Mountaineering became a competitive, nationalistic sport. Harrer and others, for instance, were awarded Olympic medals for their achievements. What was at stake was the honor of a nation. Struggle or victory, mountaineers began to speak the language of war, mountaineering became a symbol of undaunted manhood.

Popular since the beginning of the 1930s, the mountain films (by Luis Trenker, to mention but one example) exhibited pre-fascist irrational and mystic tendencies. These tendencies contributed to the fact that extreme mountaineering could serve as a precursor to the National Socialist propaganda film. At that time, the ideals of alpinism and the ideology of National Socialism sprang from the same ground.⁷²

Sixty years after the 1937 disaster on Nanga Parbat and the subsequent propagandistic glorification of the toil and suffering of German mountaineers, selective memory still rules. Once driven by personal strive and political ideology, it is now motivated by a simple economic consideration: the success at the box office.



¹Eric Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and Its Afterlife* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996), 4.

²Ibid, 3.

³The term "pre-fascist" describes a pre-1933 aesthetics which, emerging at the same time as the National Socialist movement during the 1920s and 1930s, exhibits close visual and ideational similarities to the films produced under Nazi authority between 1933 and 1945. Rapp elaborates on this connection by referring to Siegfried Kracauer who, in *From Caligari to Hitler*, "attributes to these [pre-1933] films an extraordinary aesthetic level that combines with story lines and characters motivated by (pre-)National Socialist values" and subsequently identifies these values as anti-rationalism, mysticism, heroic idealism, and nationalism. Rapp also draws on the insights of Susan Sontag who, in her essay *Fascinating Fascism*, establishes a link between Leni Riefenstahl's early mountain films and her later propaganda works by pointing to commonalities like the thematization of social qualities such as physical ability and courage as well as the call for the (physical) vitality of the community. Rapp himself identifies the similarities in Riefenstahl's films in terms of narrative style: the complete lack of a discursive mediation of the visual narrative and the "obsessive concentration on an engrossing cinematography" (Christian Rapp, *Höhenrausch: Der deutsche Bergfilm [High Euphoria: The German Mountain Film]* [Wien: Sonderzahl 1997], 12, 16-17). Even Eric Rentschler, in his critical reassessment of the phenomenon "Bergfilm" (a reading stressing the limitations of Kracauer's original analysis), concludes: "In the mountain film, we confront a spirit of surrender and heroic fustian which, without a doubt, anticipates Nazi irrationalism" (Eric Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity: Relocating the *Bergfilm*" in *Perspectives on German Cinema*, eds. Terri Ginsberg and Kirsten Moana Thompson [New York: G. K. Hall & Co., 1996], 708).

All translations in text and endnotes throughout this article are by the author.

⁴Rapp, *Höhenrausch*, 13.

⁵See Hans-Peter Kochenrath, "Kontinuität im deutschen Film (Continuities in German Cinema)" in *Film und Gesellschaft in Deutschland: Dokumente und Materialien (Film and Society in Germany: Documents and Materials)*, eds. Wilfried von Bredow and Rolf Zurek (Hamburg: Hoffman und Campe, 1975), 286-292.

⁶See, for instance, the recent Arnold Fanck exhibition (11/21/97 - 2/1/98) and retrospective (11/23/97 - 2/5/98) at the Stadtmuseum München/Filmmuseum: "Berge, Licht und Traum: Dr. Arnold Fanck und der deutsche Bergfilm (Mountains, Light and Dream: Dr. Arnold Fanck and the German Mountain Film)." The exhibition was accompanied by a catalogue of the same title: Jan-Christoph Horak, ed., *Berge, Licht und Traum: Dr. Arnold Fanck und der deutsche Bergfilm* (München: Bruckmann, 1997).

⁷For a brief review of the National Socialist discussion surrounding the terms *Kulturfilm* (cultural film) and *Dokumentarfilm* (documentary film) see Hans-Jürgen Brandt, *NS-Filmtheorie und dokumentarische Praxis: Hippler, Noldan, Junghans (NS Film Theory and Documentary Practice: Hippler, Noldan, Junghans)* (Tübingen: Niemeyer, 1987), 3-6. For the purpose of my essay, I will adopt Brandt's extended definition of the *Dokumentarfilm*: "The documentary film is the subjective presentation of objective facts via image and sound" (Brandt, *NS-Filmtheorie*, 6).

⁸See Rainer Amstädter, *Der Alpinismus: Kultur—Organisation—Politik (Alpinism: Culture—Organization—Politics)* (Wien: WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1996), 407.

⁹Detlev J. K. Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity* (London: Allen Lane/The Penguin Press, 1991), 76.

¹⁰The rationale for including both German and Austrian alpine organizations and their respective publications in my investigation is threefold: 1) Since its foundation in 1869 the German Alpine Club

(*Deutscher Alpenverein, DAV*) understood itself as reaching beyond the borders of the German state; "German" was understood as referring to the German "Volk": "The German Alpine Club does not recognize political borders; as much as it plans to gradually make the entire German Alps the subject of its research, it intends to represent all German tribes, whether they reside in Germany or in Austria" (*Zeitschrift des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins* 1 [1869/70], 1f; quoted in Amstädter, *Der Alpinismus*, 43); 2) In both World Wars I and II, Germans and Austrians fought—and experienced defeat—together. Sentiments of loss and disorientation were expressed by both and are therefore almost interchangeable, especially when originating from a discursive environment that defines "Germany" along *völkisch* lines. This is even more true after March of 1938, the date Austria (the *Ostmark*) became part of *Großdeutschland* (Greater Germany); 3) Almost all expeditions launched into the Himalayas from Germany included both German and Austrian mountaineers.

¹¹Dr. Gustav Müller, "Die Berge und ihre Bedeutung für den Wiederaufbau des deutschen Volkes," *Zeitschrift des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins (ZDÖAV)* 53 (1922): 1–9.

¹²*Ibid.*, 7.

¹³*Ibid.*, 8.

¹⁴*Ibid.*, 8–9.

¹⁵ÖAK is *Österreichischer Alpenklub* (Austrian Alpine Club). Dr. Heinrich Pfannl, "Zu neuen Taten (Towards New Deeds)," *Österreichische Alpenzeitung (ÖAZ)* 1046 (1926): 1.

¹⁶Sepp Dobiasch, "Übersee-Expeditionen (Overseas Expeditions)," *Der Bergsteiger: Deutsche Wochenschrift für Bergsteigen, Wandern, und Skilaufen* 7 (11 February 1927): 1.

¹⁷*Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁸Dr. Karl Ziak, "Soziologische Bemerkungen zur Geschichte des Alpinismus (Sociological Remarks on the History of Alpinism)," *Der Naturfreund (The Nature Lover)* 11/12 (1927): 214.

¹⁹Julius Gallhuber, "Die Expeditionen des DÖAV und die alpine Öffentlichkeit (The DÖAV Expeditions and the Alpine Public)," *Der Bergsteiger: Deutsche Wochenschrift für Bergsteigen, Wandern, und Skilaufen* 19 (1928): 1.

²⁰Helmuth Zebhauser, *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat: Gedanken, Erinnerungen, Dokumente (Alpinism in the NS State: Thoughts, Recollections, Documents)* (München: Bergverlag Rudolf Rother, 1998), 21.

²¹Amstädter, *Der Alpinismus*, 17–18. A brief look at some of the basic tenets of the National Socialist movement, the so-called "25 points" of the Nazi party program, originally formulated in 1920 by Anton Drexler, Gottfried Feder, and Adolf Hitler, and reaffirmed by Hitler in 1926, underscores both Amstädter's and Zebhauser's assessments: "The union of all Germans in a Greater Germany. / The rejection of the Treaty of Versailles and the affirmation of the right of Germany to deal with other nations. / The demand for additional territories for food production and to settle excess German population. / Citizenship to be determined by race; no Jew to be a German. / Each citizen to work for the general good. / A thorough reconstruction of the national education system. / The abolition of the paid professional army and the formation of a national army. / A strong central government for the execution of effective legislation" (quoted in James Taylor and Warren Shaw, *Dictionary of the Third Reich* [London: Penguin, 1997], 200–201).

²²Peter Mierau, *Die Deutsche Himalaja-Stiftung von 1936 bis 1998: Ihre Geschichte und ihre Expeditionen (The German Himalaya Foundation from 1936 to 1998: Its History and Expeditions)* (München: Bergverlag Rother, 1999), 234.

²³The year 1928 already saw three of them: German mountaineers (Eugen Allwein, Erwin Schneider, Dr. Karl Wien), jointly financed by the Emergency Foundation of German Scientists, the German and Austrian Alpine Club (*DÖAV*), and the Soviet Academy of Science, traveled to the Alai-Pamir range where on September 25, 1928, they reached the summit of Pik Lenin (7,127m); the German Caucasus expedition (*Sektion Hochland*) under the leadership of Paul Bauer (soon to emerge as one of the key figures in German high-altitude mountaineering during the 1930s); and the first German Andes expedition sponsored by the *DÖAV*, led by Hans Pfann. During the following year 1929, Willy Merkl, one of the premier German mountaineers of the period, led an expedition into the Caucasus region sponsored by

the *Sektion Bayerland* (Munich). Over the next ten years, German mountaineers would focus their attention on two of these mountain ranges: the Andes and the Himalayas, the tallest mountain range in the world. In both of these regions, German explorers had left their early mark. In 1801, during his South American expedition, Alexander von Humboldt reached an altitude of 5,350m on Chimborazo (6,310m) then considered to be the highest peak in the world. Between 1919 and 1939, Germans repeatedly followed in von Humboldt's footsteps. In 1932, once again sponsored by the *DÖAV*, German mountaineers traveled to the Cordillera Blanca in Peru and successfully scaled Huascarán (6,768m). The Andes remained a goal for German and Austrian mountaineers until the outbreak of World War II: the years 1936 (Cordillera Blanca and Cordillera de Huayhuash; expedition leader: Hans Kinzl), 1938 (Cordillera Blanca; Sepp Schmidbauer, Sepp Bucher), and 1939 (Andes Reconnaissance Expedition of the German Alpine Club) saw three more expeditions into this region.

²⁴In 1934, Günther Oskar Dyhrenfurth led the second "Internationale Himalaya-Expedition" into the Baltoro region, successfully scaling five peaks above 7,000m. His wife, Hettie Dyhrenfurth, set a female altitude record on Sia Kangri (Queen Mary Peak), reaching an altitude of 7,315m. Dyhrenfurth's expedition also served as the background for the production of *Der Dämon des Himalaya (The Demon of the Himalayas)* a feature film directed by Andrew Marton and starring Gustav Diessl and Jarmila Marton.

²⁵For a detailed account of the travels of the three brothers Schlagintweit, see the collection of articles in Claudius C. Müller, *Der Weg zum Dach der Welt* (Frankfurt A. M.: Umschau, 1986).

²⁶Its task as *Fachsäule* (department) XI des Deutschen Reichsbundes für Leibesübungen (German Reichsbund for Physical Education) was: "to redirect alpinism, here primarily understood as mountain sport, towards National Socialism" (Zebhauser, *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, 111).

²⁷Paul Bauer, *Das Ringen um den Nanga Parbat 1856-1953: Hundert Jahre Bergsteigerischer Geschichte (The Struggle for Nanga Parbat 1856-1953: One-Hundred Years of Mountaineering History)* (München: Süddeutscher Verlag, 1955), 13.

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Hans von Tschammer und Osten quoted in Amstädter, *Der Alpinismus*, 409.

³⁰Hans Hartmann, *ZielNanga Parbat: Tagebuchblätter einer Himalaja-Expedition (Destination Nanga Parbat: Diary of a Himalaya Expedition)* (Berlin: Limpert, 1938), 82.

³¹Quoted in Helmuth Zebhauser and Maiké Trentin-Meyer, eds., *Zwischen Idylle und Tummelplatz: Katalog für das Alpine Museum des Deutschen Alpenvereins in München (Between Pastoral and Playground: Catalogue for the Alpine Museum of the German Alpine Club in Munich)* (München: Bergverlag Rudolf Rother, 1996), 308.

³²I would have most certainly preferred to include *Nanga Parbat* into my analysis. This turned out to be impossible since: 1) there exists to my knowledge only one copy of this documentary; and 2) this copy (held in the archives of the *Deutsche Himalaja-Stiftung* at the *Alpines Museum des Deutschen Alpenvereins* [Alpine Museum of the German Alpine Club] in Munich) is scheduled for restoration and currently inaccessible.

³³The preceding information is based upon my own research into the correspondence between Frank Leberecht and the leadership of the German Himalaya Foundation, Dr. Ulrich Cameron Luft and Dr. Paul Bauer. The correspondence is preserved in the papers of Dr. Luft, which are held in the Mandeville Special Collections Library at the University of California, San Diego.

³⁴See Mierau, *Die Deutsche Himalaja-Stiftung*, 70.

³⁵*Kampf um den Himalaja*, Franz Schröder (producer), Tobis-Degeto (studio), Berlin, 1938, in Bundesfilmarchiv, Berlin, Germany.

³⁶On the multi-faceted relationship between sport and religion, see Henning Eichberg, *Der Weg des Sports in die industrielle Zivilisation (The Journey of Sports into Industrial Society)* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1973), 46-51; and more recently, Shirl J. Hoffmann, ed., *Sport and Religion* (Champaign, Ill.: Human Kinetics Books, 1992) and Charles S. Prebish, ed., *Religion and Sport: The Meeting of Sacred and Profane* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1993).

³⁷Quoted in Peter Reichel, *Der schöne Schein des Dritten Reiches: Faszination und Gewalt des Faschismus* (*The Beautiful Illusion of the Third Reich: On the Fascination and Violence of Fascism*) (Frankfurt am Main: Fischer, 1993), 208.

³⁸Nowhere is this tendency more evident than in Leni Riefenstahl's "documentary" of the 1934 *Reichsparteitag* (Reich Party Rally) in Nuremberg, *Triumph des Willens* (*Triumph of the Will*, 1935). Recently on the liturgical structure of Riefenstahl's film, see Klaus Kanzog, "Der Dokumentarfilm als politischer Katechismus: Bemerkungen zu Leni Riefenstahls *Triumph des Willens* (1935) (Documentary Film as Political Catechism: Remarks on Leni Riefenstahl's *Triumph of the Will* [1935])" in Manfred Hattendorf, ed., *Perspektiven des Dokumentarfilms* (Perspectives on the Documentary Film) (München: diskurs film Verlag, 1995), 57-84.

³⁹Jay W. Baird, *To Die For Germany: Heroes in the Nazi Pantheon* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990).

⁴⁰On the connection between sport and heroism, see the recent anthology, Richard Holt, J. A. Mangan, Pierre Lanfranchi, eds., *European Heroes: Myth, Identity, Sport* (London: Frank Cass, 1996).

⁴¹Quoted in Amstädter, *Der Alpinismus*, 411; *ÖAZ*, 1148 (1934): 227.

⁴²Quoted in Zebhauser, *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, 128-129.

⁴³Quoted in Amstädter, *Der Alpinismus*, 412.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵On the connection between sport and militarism recently, especially war preparations, see Jean-Michel Faure, "Forging a French Fighting Spirit: The Nation, Sport, Violence and War," in J. A. Mangan, ed., *Tribal Identities: Nationalism, Sport, Europe* (London: Frank Cass, 1996), 75-93.

⁴⁶Meinhart Sild, "Bergsteigen als Rüstung," *ÖAZ* 1195 (1938): 160-164.

⁴⁷Ibid., 162.

⁴⁸Meinhart Sild, "Bergsteigen—Notwendigkeit und Aufgabe," *ÖAZ* 1201 (1939): 15.

⁴⁹Baird, *To Die For Germany*, xvi.

⁵⁰Hilmar Hoffmann, *The Triumph of Propaganda: Film and National Socialism 1933-1945* (Providence/Oxford: Bergahn Books, 1996), 131.

⁵¹As far as I could ascertain, these screenings featured the original version of *Kampf um den Himalaja*. To my knowledge, there exists no reedited version of *Kampf um den Himalaja*.

⁵²Quoted in Mierau, *Die Deutsche Himalaja-Stiftung*, 151.

⁵³Ibid., 152.

⁵⁴*FWU* was the result of merging the existing *Institut für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Unterricht* in Hamburg and the *Institut für den Unterrichtsfilm* (Educational Film Institute) in Munich into one entity on March 6, 1950. The new institution retained the name of the original Hamburg branch.

⁵⁵The work is unmistakably composed of segments from the two documentaries of 1936 and 1938, as well as footage from the unscreened material from the 1938 expedition.

⁵⁶*FWU*, however, has dropped the documentary from its active catalogue.

⁵⁷In 1951, the year of release for *Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen*, the legacy of the German Himalaya Foundation was threatened by two developments. Firstly, its very existence was at stake when the *Bayerisches Landesamt für Vermögensverwaltung* (Bavarian Office of Property Administration) submitted the foundation to the process of denazification. Secondly, this development threatened the "Alleinvertretungsanspruch" (the sole right of representation) in regard to the organization of German expeditions into the Himalayas of the foundation, unquestioned under National Socialist rule. Dr. Karl Herrligkoffer, leader of the successful 1953 *Willy-Merkl-Gedächtnis-Expedition* (Willy Merkl Memorial Expedition) to Nanga Parbat, would cite the foundation's National Socialist past in 1952 while trying to gather support for his project (only one permit to climb Nanga Parbat would be issued by Pakistani authorities for the year 1953).

⁵⁸*Deutsche Himalaja-Expeditionen* literally remains silent on these issues. The original audio narrative from *Kampf um den Himalaja* was most certainly unsuitable for the intended purpose of the new documentary.

⁵⁹Anton Kaes reaches a similar conclusion: "Paradoxically, in the early postwar years . . . the denazification program . . . and Allied control of all media and institutions did more to impede than to promote free discussion among Germans about their own past" (Anton Kaes, *From Hitler to Heimat: The Return of History on Film* [Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992], 13-14).

⁶⁰For a photo of Alfred Drexel's flag-draped body, see Zebhauser, *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, 127.

⁶¹For details, see Michael Kühn, *Unterrichtsfilm im Nationalsozialismus: Die Arbeit der Reichsstelle für den Unterrichtsfilm/Reichsanstalt für Film und Bild in Wissenschaft und Unterricht (Educational Film and National Socialism: The Work of the Reich Agency for the Educational Film/Reich Agency for Film and Image in Science and Instruction)* (Mammendorf: septem artes, 1998), 240.

⁶²Quoted in Kühn, *Unterrichtsfilm im Nationalsozialismus*, 238.

⁶³Knut Hieckethier, "Zur Tradition schulischer Beschäftigung mit den Massenmedien: Ein Abriss der Geschichte deutscher Medienpädagogik (Mass Media in the Schools: An Overview of German Media Pedagogy)" in Reent Schwarz, ed., *Didaktik der Massenkommunikation (Didactics of Mass Communication)* (Stuttgart: Metzler, 1974), 41.

⁶⁴In addition to Fridolin Schmid, some of these individuals were: Dr. Willi Mohaupt, Dr. Hans Nitzschke (*Leiter der Lichtbildabteilung der Reichsanstalt* [Head of the (Moving) Image Section of RWU]), Dr.-Ing. Gotthard Wolf (*Leiter der Abteilung "Technischer Forschungsfilm"* [Section Head, "Technical Research Film"]), Erwin Pättsch (*Leiter der Abteilung für Berufsschulfilme* [Section Head, Films for Vocational Schools]).

⁶⁵*Mitteilungen des Fachamtes [für Bergsteigen und Wandern] im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* 7 (1936); quoted in Zebhauser, *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, 109.

⁶⁶Klaus Kreimeier, *Kino und Filmindustrie in der BRD: Ideologieproduktion und Klassenwirklichkeit nach 1945 (Cinema and Film Industry in the German Federal Republic: Ideology Production and Class Reality after 1945)* (Kronberg/Ts.: Scriptor, 1973), 196.

⁶⁷Herbert Stettner, "Humaner Krieg schon für Sechsjährige (Humane War for Six Year Olds)" in Walter Böckmann, ed., *Film-Fernsehen-Striptease: Wahn und Wirklichkeit einer Moral (Film-Television-Striptease: Delusion and Reality of a Moral)* (Frankfurt: Hirsch, 1964), 98.

⁶⁸The one individual who finally succeeded in reaching the top of Nanga Parbat in 1953, the Austrian Hermann Buhl, must have sensed the danger originating from such an uncritical appropriation of a nation's tainted past. For him, Nanga Parbat was no "Schicksalsberg," nor did he climb the mountain for the German or Austrian people. His goal was purely personal: "It is an extreme delight to ascend this way, without a restricting rope and without a heavy load. This is real climbing! I want to test myself, want to find out about my personal limits" quoted in Zebhauser, *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, 131-132.

⁶⁹Rentschler, *Ministry*, 51.

⁷⁰*Ibid.*, 46.

⁷¹*Ibid.*, 51.

⁷²*Vorwärts: Sozialistische Wochenzeitung (Socialist Weekly)* 48 (1997; online version <http://www.pda.ch/vorwaerts/1997/48index.html>).