



Leni Riefenstahl: A Memoir

By Leni Riefenstahl

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Leni Riefenstahl is a ninety-year-old German who has been a dancer, actress, deep sea diver, photographer of African tribes--and Hitler's top film executive. In her own unique style, she tells the story of her life and its mark on history. photos. A "New York Times" Notable Book of the Year. One of the century's most remarkable and controversial women, Leni Riefenstahl is an artist of the first order. Dancer, actor, and photographer, she is best known as the director of "Triumph of the Will," a film of a Nazi Party rally and "Olympia," the classic account of the 1936 Berlin Olympics. It is for these works of cinematic propaganda that Riefenstahl is revered and reviled. In this autobiography, she discusses her motivations, her history, her important friendships, and, most of all, her art. Along with insights into directing and camera work, Riefenstahl offers an emotional, powerful story of a woman who refuses to be defined by any terms other than her own.

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Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Filmmaker for Adolf Hitler and top film executive for the Third Reich, Riefenstahl (b. 1902) portrays herself, in this unconvincing, self-justifying autobiography, as a naive dancer/actress who was seduced by the Fuhrer's charisma and recognized his demonic nature too late. She states that she "unreservedly rejected Hitler's racist ideas" and found out about the genocide of the Jews only after the war. Further, she insists, she filmed her documentary on the 1936 Olympic Games in Berlin only because of Hitler's unyielding orders, and she had no inkling that it would be used as Nazi Party propaganda. One marvels at how time seems to have dimmed Riefenstahl's conscience. She writes that Joseph Goebbels made crude, aggressive sexual advances on her and later waged a vendetta against her. Relating encounters with Mussolini, Albert Speer, Walt Disney, Marlene Dietrich, Andy Warhol and Jean Cocteau, Riefenstahl in this overlong self-portrait describes her postwar imprisonment by French occupational forces, her "rehabilitation" and her filmmaking travels from Vienna to the Sudan. Photos.

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From Library Journal

The subtitle of this book could appropriately have been "An Apologia." According to Riefenstahl, she is an apolitical, passive person who was pushed into her career as a German film actress and filmmaker of such Nazi-era classics as *Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia*. Whatever the truth, she did have a remarkable career then and subsequently achieved new fame as a talented photographer. Unfortunately, she writes in a monotonous, unemotional style that dilutes the most prominent times of her life, even her relationship with Hitler. This, coupled with the dubious reliability of her recollections, make the memoir a disappointment. Such works as David Hinton's *The Films of Leni Riefenstahl* (Scarecrow, 1992), Renata Berg-Pan's *Leni Riefenstahl* (Twayne, 1980), and Glenn Infield's *Leni Riefenstahl: The Fallen Film Goddess* (LJ 10/15/76) will have to suffice until a definitive biography is written.

- Roy Liebman, *California State Univ. Lib., Los Angeles*

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From Kirkus Reviews

A sad and stupendously flat reminiscence by the doyenne of the German cinema, who even now seems unwilling to admit that she backed the wrong horse in 1933. It's impossible to consider Riefenstahl's career in normal terms, since politics and history have invaded it from every side. The product of a bourgeois home in Brandenburg, she established herself as a dancer and actress during the heyday of the Berlin scene in the 20's. The German film industry at that time was the most advanced in the world, and Riefenstahl wasn't slow to pick up the creative potential of the medium--producing some of the most remarkable works of the decade. She made pioneering use of location photography and nonprofessional actors, and was one of the few actresses of the time who managed to cross into production and direction. Her early success in *The Blue Light* brought her to the attention of the Nazis, who'd just come to power and were assembling one of the most effective propaganda machines ever. Although she never joined the Party--and, in fact, came to be despised by Goebbels and other Nazi functionaries because of her independence--Riefenstahl enchanted Hitler, who gave her free rein in her work. The documentaries that she created for the Ministry of Propaganda--*Triumph of the Will* and *Olympia*--have haunted her ever since. Magnificently shot and edited, they were so well received abroad that Riefenstahl would never live down her reputation as a propagandist for the Third Reich. After the war, she was imprisoned briefly, and has been something of a pariah in the international film industry ever since. Here, she attempts to rehabilitate herself in the eyes of the world and to assert that her identity as an artist subsumed her political inclinations (which, if she's to be believed, were

quite ambivalent toward Nazism). Hard to swallow, even with a grain of salt. (Forty pages of b&w photos--not seen) -- *Copyright ©1993, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved.*

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Lucille Davis:

Book is to be different for each grade. Book for children until finally adult are different content. As it is known to us that book is very important for us. The book Leni Riefenstahl: A Memoir had been making you to know about other knowledge and of course you can take more information. It is extremely advantages for you. The reserve Leni Riefenstahl: A Memoir is not only giving you a lot more new information but also to become your friend when you sense bored. You can spend your spend time to read your reserve. Try to make relationship together with the book Leni Riefenstahl: A Memoir. You never sense lose out for everything should you read some books.

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