Finding Aid for Ernst Jaeger papers 0340

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USC Libraries Special Collections
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Title: Ernst Jaeger papers
Collection number: 0340
Contributing Institution: USC Libraries Special Collections
Language of Material: English
Physical Description: 2.0 Linear feet2 boxes
Date (inclusive): 1950-1970

Abstract: The collection comprises correspondence between Ernst Jaeger and filmmaker Leni Riefenstahl, starting in the 1950s to the 1970s as well as screenplays, manuscripts and other correspondence from Ernst Jaeger. Blending audio recordings, photographs and correspondence, the cinematic memorabilia offers insight into the tumultuous relationship of the one-time colleagues, revealing how Riefenstahl coped emotionally and financially with her unenvious status as a social pariah following Germany’s World War II defeat. Materials that include letters in her own handwriting are an invaluable source for her perspective on life after the war, and they shed light on the reputation of her films and their importance as part of fascist propaganda. Many of the postcards and letters in the collection are in her native German, though many have been translated into English. This discrete but rich collection not only provides insight into Leni Riefenstahl's personal and financial worries, but also details her relationship with her former collaborator and mentor, Ernst Jaeger. While the first part of the collection focuses on the relationship between Riefenstahl and Jaeger, the second part mainly focuses on Jaegers work in the US. Several manuscripts for screenplays as well as his personal and business correspondence highlight Jaeger’s efforts in finding work and recognition in the film business.

creator: Jaeger, Ernst, 1869-1944

Scope and Content
Collection comprises correspondence between Ernst Jaeger and Leni Riefenstahl. Some of the letters have been transcribed and translated into English. The collection also contains several photographs of Riefenstahl. It also contains one letter spoken onto an audio tape by Riefenstahl. Box 2 mainly houses personal and business correspondence of Ernst Jaeger as well as manuscripts and screenplays by Jaeger.

Biographical note
The Ernst Jaeger papers include numerous primary source materials on Leni Riefenstahl and on Jaeger, a renowned German journalist.

Born Berta Helene Amalie Riefenstahl in 1902, Leni grew up in Berlin. She studied dance and was soon performing in Munich, Berlin and Prague until a knee injury ended her stage career but did not stop her from a transition to film. Within months of viewing Arnold Fanck's "Berg des Schicksals" (Mountain of Destiny) the film she credits with piquing her curiosity in cinema, Riefenstahl starred in another of Fanck's mountain films, "Der heilige Berg" (The Sacred Mountain, aka Peaks of Destiny), after a chance meeting with the director. After appearing in several films, Riefenstahl turned to directing, a remarkable feat for a woman in a field dominated by men.

In the spring of 1932, anti-Nazi journalist Jaeger encouraged Riefenstahl to join him at Berlin's Sportspalast arena to hear Adolf Hitler rally the audience in his bid to become president. "It seemed as if the earth's surface were spreading out in front of me, like a hemisphere that suddenly splits apart in the middle, spewing out an enormous jet of water, so powerful that it touched the sky and shook the earth", she later recalled. "I felt quite paralyzed."

Although Riefenstahl reportedly rebuffed his amorous advances, Hitler soon commissioned Riefenstahl to execute a chilling work of demagoguery known as Triumph des Willens (The Triumph of the Will), an account of the pomp and pageantry of the Nazi Party's Sixth Nuremberg Party Congress. The film featured a cast of thousands, including Hitler, Heinrich Himmler, Josef Goebbels, Rudolf Hess, Hermann Goering and other top party officials.

Riefenstahl followed Triumph of the Will with Olympia, an epic two-part documentary about the 1936 Berlin Olympics. While directing Olympia, Riefenstahl oversaw a crew of 60 cinematographers who shot more than 1.3 million feet (248 miles) of film. In the process, she invented or enhanced many of the cinematography techniques now taken for granted: slow-motion shots of athletes, the use of a telephoto lens for close-ups, underwater diving shots, high shots from towers and low shots from pits, panoramic aerial shots taken from blimps and cameras deployed on rails to capture fast movements. To this day, Olympia is still considered a cinematic masterpiece.

Riefenstahl hired Jaeger, the former editor-in-chief of a popular German trade journal as her press chief, although doing so raised the ire of Goebbels, the Nazi minister of propaganda. Jaeger, a Social Democrat, had been expelled from the Reich Literature Chamber by Goebbels, partly because his wife was Jewish. Jaeger ended up ghostwriting publications on behalf of Riefenstahl. "I had been able to help him a year earlier when he was in financial straits: My firm commissioned him to write a brochure on the work involved in Triumph of the Will", she wrote in her memoir. Riefenstahl also requested that Jaeger accompany her to America to help secure U.S. distribution for Olympia. The trip was not as successful as she had hoped.
because few executives welcomed her. Even with near-universal acclaim, the Third Reich-tainted Olympia never found a U.S. distributor, and a dejected Riefenstahl set sail for Germany.

The ongoing debate continues as to whether Riefenstahl was merely recording events that had been staged by the Nazis (as she claimed until her death), or whether she alone was responsible for the film's persuasive visual dynamics and production design.

(from: Acquisition Shifts Focus to Filmmaker, by Dan Knapp, USC News, 08/08/05)

**Preferred Citation**

[Identification of item], Ernst Jaeger papers, Collection no. 0340, Feuchtwanger Memorial Library, Special Collections, USC Libraries, University of Southern California

**Acquisition**
Purchased from Ernst Jaeger's daughter Linda D'Aprix in 2004.

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COLLECTION STORED OFF-SITE. Advance notice required for access.

**Subjects and Indexing Terms**

Jaeger, Ernst, 1869-1944 -- Archives
Riefenstahl, Leni -- Correspondence
Correspondence
Exiles--Germany--History--20th century--Archival resources
Exiles--United States--History--20th century--Archival resources
Germany--Emigration and immigration--History--1933-1945--Archival resources
Photographs
Postcards
Screenwriters--California--Los Angeles--Archival resources
Typescripts

**Photographs**

Box 2
--- Sleeve with 8 photos of Leni Riefenstahl
Box 2
--- Sleeve with 2 photos of ruins and 4 photos of Ernst Jaeger and Richard Oswald
Box 2
--- Sleeve with 4 photos
Box 2
--- album with photographs of Ernst Jaeger's family and birthplace Dessau

**Correspondence**

Folder I with letters from Leni Riefenstahl to Jaeger

Box 1
--- 09/05/53 letter (10 pages)
Box 1
--- 01/16/56 Letter (3 pages)
Box 1
--- 3/13/56 Letter (2 pages)
Box 1
--- 5/15/56 letter (2 pages)
Box 1
--- 6/28/56 Letter (4 pages)
Box 1
--- 10/19/56 Letter (1 page)
Box 1
--- Unknown day, 1956 (3 pages)
Box 1
--- 1/15/57 Letter (1/4 page)
Box 1
--- 11/2/57 Letter (1 page)
Correspondence
Folder I with letters from Leni Riefenstahl to Jaeger

Box 1
1/27/58 Letter (3 pages)
  General note
  English translation available

Box 1
2/22/58 Letter (1 page)
  General note
  English translation available

Box 1
12/5/58 letter (2 pages)

Box 1
4/11/59 Letter (2 pages)

Box 1
6/7/59 letter (2 pages)
  General note
  English translation available

Box 1
4/16/59 letter (1 page)
  General note
  English translation available

Box 1
8/10/59 Letter (2 pages)

Box 1
Letter, (1 page)

Box 1
11/18/59 letter (3 pages)

Box 1
6/14/60 letter (2 pages)

Box 1
11/8/70 letter (1 page)

Box 1
7/22/70 postcard

Box 1
11/23/70 letter (10 pages)

Box 1
1/10/71 letter (1 page)

Box 1
3/27/71 letter (1 page)

Box 1
7/30/71 Letter (1 page)
  General note
  English translation available

Box 1
1/17/72 letter (1 page)
  General note
  English translation available

Box 1
3/22/71 letter (1 page)

Box 1
Audio recording of letter from Leni Riefenstahl to Ernst Jaeger, 05/03/1971, 07/30/1971, spoken by L.Riefenstahl (tape has been digitized and transfered to CD)

Box 2
Folder II with correspondence from Jaeger to Leni Riefenstahl

May 1970 letter, 1 page
01/05/1971 letter, 1 page
04/14/1971 letter (english transcript)
08/09/1971 letter, 2 pages
06/16/? letter, 2 pages
letter, unknown
undated letter, 1 page
04/14/1971 letter, 1 page
approx. 05/07/1970 letter, 1 page
  General note
  english translation exists

12/02/1970 letter, 1 page
Correspondence

Folder II with correspondence from Jaeger to Leni Riefenstahl

04/16/1971 letter, 2 pages (to Riefenstahl's secretary Inge Brandler)
01/29/1959 letter, 1 page
02/20/1971 letter, 1 page (to Inge Brandler)

Box 2

Ernst Jaeger biographical notes

Box 2

Werner Klingeberg

Department of Justice 1940-1949

General note

includes correspondence re. deportation, enemy alien issues, citizenship

Box 2

Raymond Rohauer (re Olympia film)

Condolences to Mrs. Jaeger

Box 2

Walter Traut

Box 2

Misc. correspondence

Box 2

Prof. Koebner, Uni Marburg

Box 2

Frank Wisbar Productions

General note

production notes, staff lists, budget sheets, clippings, Fireside Theater paperwork. Also includes Ernst Jaeger scripts "Confession" and "The Shot"

Box 2

Sanatorium for The Jewish Consumptives' Relief Society, record of employment

Box 2

Werner Sudendorf

Articles

Box 2

Newspaper Clippings about Ernst Jaeger

Box 2

Hollywood Tribune: How Leni Riefenstahl became Hitler's girlfriend, parts I-V

Box 2

Various newspaper articles about Riefenstahl
Articles

Box 2  Leni Riefenstahl, Bela Balacs and The Blue Light
Box 2  Filmkurier issues, 1928 and 1930

Manuscripts

Luegen und Die Geliebte ( Lies to the Beloved), eine Novelle von Ernst Jaeger, June 1947
Box 2  Lie to the Beloved, manuscript with annotations
Box 2  Mein Fuerst, die Pferde sind gesattelt, by Ernst Jaeger, May 1947
Box 2  Die Kinder der Minerva
Box 2  Pete, by Ernst Jaeger
Box 2  Eines Tellerwaeschers Denver Tagebuch, July 1944
Box 2  Eines Tellerwaeschers Denver Tagebuch - Besuch von der Knusperhexe, von Ernst Jaeger
Box 2  Tod in Hollywood - eine wahre Geschichte, July 1947
Box 2  Von Hexen und einem Rotdorn-Zweig
Box 2  Ich stahl vier Schallplatten..
Box 2  Throw wide your branches, Original story by Ernst and Mera Jaeger, 1953
Box 2  Mark of Heaven, Original story by Ernst and Mera Jaeger, 1953
Box 2  Winged Furies, Original story by Ernst and Mera Jaeger, 1953
Box 2  Ernst Jaeger’s dissertation: Der Marxismus und die Grossmaechte bis zum Weltkriege 1914