

SYNOPSIS



Hitler's Useful Idols - Hitler's Iron Angel

Hitlers nützliche Idole - Hitlers eiserner Engel

The incredible story of a young woman who crossed the Andes in a glider, piloted a helicopter through a sports arena, and advanced to chief test pilot of the German air force. Hanna Reitsch was born on March 29, 1912 in Hirschberg, Silesia. She was one of the bestknown and most successful German female pilots of the 20th century, and set over forty records in all classes and all types of airplanes. At first glance, Hanna Reitsch doesn't fit the Nazi ideal of a German woman and mother at all, yet the young pilot soon turns into one of the most popular heroines of Hitler's regime. She embodies modernity, daring, and unconditional belief in Nazi ideology, and the Nazis in turn offer the ardent aviation pioneer every opportunity to live her dream. Hanna Reitsch succumbs to their seductions. She is received into the Nazi leaders' innermost circle and always a welcome guest at both the Führer's beloved Bavarian mountain residence and his Berlin headquarters. A liaison connects her with the «aviation hero» Colonel General Ernst Udet, and she once asked Heinrich Himmler, «Reichsführer SS, are you gassing Jews?» As late as in April 1945, Reitsch tried to fly Adolf Hitler from his Berlin «Führerbunker», but was unable to persuade him. Under heavy fire, she landed a «Fieseler Stork» at the Brandenburg Gate and was one of the last to leave besieged Berlin, together with the commander of the German Air Force, Robert Ritter von Greim. Following World War II, the female «aviation legend» lived in Salzburg, among other places. After 18 months in prison, she resumed work as a test pilot, set yet more records, and was received in the White House by U.S. President John F. Kennedy. She died in Frankfurt, Germany, in 1979 and was buried in Salzburg. Even long after the war was over, she never completely distanced herself from National Socialism. The German news magazine «Der Spiegel» wrote in its obituary: «Hanna Reitsch ... embodied to an extreme the German National schizophrenia between outward modernity and inward medievalism, between technical and scientific intelligence and blind 'faith', between personal decency and collective barbarity.»

Year: 2010

Run-Time: 1 x 50 min.

Directed by Gerhard Jelinek

A co-production of ORF and Interspot

Available for USA, Germany, Austria, UK, Ireland and the German language in Switzerland, Luxembourg and Liechtenstein

Languages: German (ORIGINAL) , English (DUBBED)

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