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Obituary

Erwin Schneider died quite unexpectedly in August 1987 at his home in Lech am Arlberg, Austria. Born in 1906, he received his diploma in geodesy in Berlin. This place was chosen by his father who wanted him, a passionate climber from his youth, to get his professional training far away from the ever-tempting Alps. Yet curiously enough, it was precisely in Berlin that Schneider was provided with the opportunity of participating in several mountaineering expeditions, such as the German-Soviet expedition to Peak Lenin in the Pamirs in 1928, another one to the Kanchenzonga in 1930 and the tragic attempt to climb Nanga Parbat in 1934, to mention just a few. Renowned for his outstanding constitution and stamina, he was one of the best alpinists of his time, as is shown by the amazing number of seven thousand-meter peaks he scaled. As he disliked applause and even more national-socialism, official acknowledgement of his performance was long in coming.

To the younger readers of HRB, Schneider may be better known as the cartographer who, besides pioneering surveys of Mt. Kenya and Huascarán in Peru, initiated a series of 1:50,000 (2 cm = 1 km) scale maps of East Nepal, and another series of maps of the Kathmandu Valley, including the city areas of Kathmandu and Patan. (For more information on these maps which were published between 1967 and 1981, see HRB Fall 1983, Vol. III, No. 3, appendix.) Further maps of Ganesh, Langthang and Jugal Himal, to which Schneider contributed basic survey data, are now under preparation.

Schneider first set foot upon Nepalese soil as early as in 1930. He loved this country, not only its mountains, and was constantly on the move between Lech and Kathmandu even in the last decade of his life when his health obliged him to content himself with conducting aerial surveys both for research and development projects. With less modesty and more taste for publicity, which he notoriously shunned, he would have no doubt been in a position to realize his dream of mapping the entire Nepal Himalaya. Even so it was no small comfort to him to see the growing demand for what he had achieved through successive small-scale fieldworks and with the help of a few friends of his. (After all, the only reliable map of Nepal, the one inch - one mile map by the Survey of India, is inaccessible to the public, outdated in some respects and incomplete with regard to the high-mountain zone.) Erwin Schneider has acquired lasting merit, and his generosity and cheerful company will be gratefully remembered by those who had the privilege to work with him.

András Höfer