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**Mountains, Mountaineering and Modernity: A Cultural History of
German and Austrian Mountaineering, 1900-1945**

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**Mountains, Mountaineering and Modernity: A Cultural History of
German and Austrian Mountaineering, 1900-1945**

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Dedication

For Clair, my family and our friends in all parts of the earth

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Mountains, Mountaineering and Modernity: A Cultural History of German and Austrian Mountaineering, 1900-1945

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During the Weimar Republic, mountaineering organizations sought to establish hegemony over the cultural narrative of mountaineering. Contemporary texts published by various alpine organizations positioned mountaineering as an activity reserved for a select elite, casting alpinists as masculine nationalists committed to the preservation of the Alps as their exclusive ‘playground of Europe.’ Until World War I, the German-Austrian Alpenverein, the largest alpine club in the world, maintained firm control over mountaineering’s master narrative.

I argue that, during the Weimar years, this master narrative was subject to onslaughts from ideological opponents (such as the socialist alpine club, *Die Naturfreunde*), commercial competitors (the mass tourism industry in the Alps), and alternative representations of mountaineering in the cinematic genre of the *Bergfilm*. The profusion of alternatives to the formerly hegemonic Alpenverein narrative offered audiences new ways to imagine mountaineering, and this challenge created significant

fissures within the Alpenverein itself as it struggled to sustain its dominance over the representations and cultural meanings of mountaineering.

As I investigate the fracturing of mountaineering's master narrative, I consider how alpine organizations reacted to the new cultural constellations that arose in Weimar and challenged the Alpenverein's master narrative. To establish the contours of this narrative, I draw upon the Alpenverein's own *Zeitschriften* and *Mitteilungen*, and I also consult popular alpine journals, such as *Der Bergsteiger* and the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung*, paying close attention to how alpine organizations articulated their critiques of the mass tourism industry and published negative depictions of the increasing modernization of the Alps. Additionally, I examine how the *Bergfilm* genre threatened this master narrative, and how the Alpenverein attempted unsuccessfully to blunt the genre's popularity.

In its analysis of texts and films as normative cultural products, my dissertation focuses on how the culture of mountaineering was contested in the realm of narrative and visual representations. The latter chapters discuss how the Alpenverein later aligned itself with the Nazi regime, not only out of ideological affinity, but also in order to utilize the machinery of the Nazi state to reassert its full control over mountaineering's master narrative.

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Introduction: Alps, Alpinism, Alpenverein

This dissertation examines the development of alpine representations and the culture of mountaineering in Germany and Austria from its formation in 1869 to the early years of the Third Reich. In my analysis of the momentous changes that occurred within the Alpenverein during this period, I identify the formation, contestation and affirmation of a master narrative for mountains and mountaineering within the German-Austrian Alpenverein. Among the multiple narratives of mountains and mountaineering in circulation at the time – including mountains as a recuperative space, as a sporting landscape, as a harbor from the ravages of industrialization, and as a pristine reification of the sublime – the Alpenverein’s master narrative eventually won out. This was not because the Alpenverein managed to convince or persuade the general public that the Alpenverein’s perspective was more advantageous or appealing, but because, beginning in 1933, the Alpenverein was conveniently aligned with the ideological imperatives of the Third Reich.

My dissertation negotiates a territory between social history and cultural studies. It focuses on the history of an institution – the German-Austrian Alpenverein – and how this institution attempted to impose a master narrative on cultural representations of mountaineering. I have consulted a broad array of sources, including the Alpenverein’s own journals, the journals of other mountaineering organizations, alpine novels, postcards, photography, documentary and feature films, as well as archival materials housed at the Alpine Museum in Munich. I have sifted through these materials to discover how mountains and mountaineering were represented, and in my research I discovered the development of what many mountaineers referred to in the 1920s as the “alpine idea.”

This “alpine idea” is a complex of representations that include textual and visual sources, and it is this constellation of mountain representations that I identify as the Alpenverein’s master narrative. The purpose of this project is to trace the history of this master narrative through Germany’s tumultuous early twentieth century, through World War I to the threshold of World War II.

The German Alpenverein and the Austrian Alpenverein existed first as separate entities. When German unification under Prussian dominance resulted in a “kleindeutsch” solution, excluding Austria from the German nation, the German and Austrian Alpenvereine joined together in 1873, thereby demonstrating their adherence to “Großdeutschland.” Aside from questions of nationhood, the Alpenverein’s master narrative incorporated many of the universalist Enlightenment ideals of Germany’s liberal bourgeoisie. The Alpenverein considered the Alps to be a natural treasure, a landscape that should elevate the spirits – and heart rates – of all visitors. Unlike the Alpine Club, its aristocratic counterpart in England, the German-Austrian Alpenverein opened its doors to anyone who had an interest in mountains and mountaineering, whether that interest meant simply paying dues so that one could receive the Alpenverein’s weekly and yearly publications, or whether that involvement extended to active participation in long arduous mountain climbs. Membership was open to men and women, regardless of class background or political persuasion; indeed, the Alpenverein was to proclaim itself an apolitical organization right up until the Nazi seizure of power in 1933. And unlike the British Alpine Club, which had restrictive membership requirements, the Alpenverein flourished in the late-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, rapidly becoming the largest alpine organization in the world. The Alpenverein was unique in its universalist approach: the French, Italian and Swiss alpine clubs that

sprang up in the late nineteenth century followed the British Alpine Club down the path of exclusivity.

The Alpenverein wielded a great deal of power at the turn of the century, especially in regard to alpine space. Using the energies and dues of their sizeable membership, the Alpenverein began building hiking trails and signs, primitive emergency shelters and ever more elaborate and ornate alpine huts. In many ways, the Alpenverein sought to shape the alpine experience into one unchanged by the encroachment of civilization and industrialization. Alpine huts, often modeled on the architecture of local villages, sought to accommodate urban mountaineers within the same sorts of building that already dotted alpine valleys.

The Alpenverein proved surprisingly powerless, however, in their fight against the coming railroad and the construction of luxury resorts in the Alps. The explosion of alpine tourism in the late nineteenth century, which was interrupted only briefly by the outbreak of World War I, posed threats and challenges to the Alpenverein's early attempts to preserve a particular style of alpine experience. Hydroelectric dams and waterworks projects, railways of every imaginable design, and the astonishing construction rate of elegant hotels for wealthy tourists, all contradicted the Alpenverein's preferred narrative of the alpine pastoral. Rather than the upstanding, hardworking moral peasantry described in the Swiss poet Albrecht von Haller's *Die Alpen (The Alps, 1729)*, the Alpenverein believed that both the alpine landscape and its native inhabitants faced the threat of extinction under the machinations of businessmen and the naive enthusiasms of mass tourism.

The ravages of World War I are a significant breaking point in the history of the Alpenverein. Before the War, the Alpenverein had maintained its open admissions policy and done an admirable job of staying out of political struggles. After the War, however,

the Alpenverein envisioned the Alps in an entirely new way. The Alps were now a training ground for a nation of warriors, a harsh landscape where muscle and mind could be honed for battle. There were numerous articles about the alpine warfare of World War I in the Alpenverein's publications, and even more articles about the loss of South Tyrol to Italy under the Treaty of Saint Germain. In many ways, the Alps became a microcosm of the nation, a geographic site where mountaineers would train the next generation of soldiers.

After World War I, the Alpenverein also became increasingly strident in its opposition to a number of developments in the Alps. Some of the Alpenverein's more daring members began to promote forms of climbing that refused to make use of any man-made devices or structures in the pursuit of a mountain peak, including ropes, carabiners or other climbing aids; these same climbers avoided the alpine huts, claiming that the huts had become hubs for swarms of tourists that were crowding formerly pristine mountain landscapes. Alpine construction, which continued at a furious pace after 1918, further angered mountaineers who sought alpine preservation rather than exploitation; the construction of a railway to the top of the Zugspitze, the highest alpine peak on German soil, provoked outrage within the Alpenverein. Similar projects were approved all over Germany, Austria and Switzerland, often over the objections of the Alpenverein's organized opposition. It seemed that nothing could stop the juggernaut of commercial tourism, and the Alpenverein became increasingly agitated over its seeming impotence to help shape the landscape to which it had dedicated itself.

The basis of the Alpenverein's opposition to these developments was a new set of meanings that were attached to the Alps. The Alps were no longer "the playground of Europe," where well-heeled climbers with the money and leisure time could hike through a landscape relatively void of human presence. Instead, Alpenverein members

complained more and more about the number of people crowding certain popular and accessible peaks, about drunken, salacious behavior at the alpine huts, about the dating culture of ski resorts, about the impossibility of hiking through an alpine valley without hearing the song and laughter of another group, or the shrill whistle of an oncoming train. In the 1920s, mountaineers began to look back with nostalgia, creating an imaginary ideal of an alpine space uncluttered by the signs of progress, not yet crowded by hordes of tourists. This was a major shift in the universalist master narrative of the 1870s.

In this regard, alpine space became associated with *Heimat*, the idea of one's home. *Heimat* was an ideal construct that drew upon the memory of traditions in order to inoculate a community against the ravages of modernity. The historian Alon Confino has described *Heimat* as a nation of the mind, a collective mental construct with its own unique characteristics, limitations and possibilities. *Heimat* connected the local, regional and national imagination, bringing thousands of local identities under the all-encompassing roof of the German *Heimat*. As Confino points out, hundreds of *Heimat* museums built before 1918 presented an ideal "Germanic" space, furnished with supposedly traditional German goods, populated by ideal "Germanic" people. These images of *Heimat* "represented the national community as an eternal community, beyond time, thus creating a chain between the German past, present, and future."¹ And in the context of tourism, the idea of *Heimat* was particularly useful to agencies, towns and regions that sought to capitalize on the growing tourist industry. Yet the tourist industry was not the only party that laid claim to *Heimat*; in the Alps, the Alpenverein also employed the discourse of *Heimat* to pursue a program strongly at odds with the tourism

¹ Alon Confino, The Nation as a Local Metaphor. Württemberg, Imperial Germany, and National Memory, 1871-1918 (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1997) 172-3.

industry: preservation of the Alps as a national treasure, rather than their exploitation and destruction.

Casting the Alps as a space of *Heimat*, then, served two ends. First, *Heimat* helped to commercialize the alpine experience and market alpine tourism to a broad potential customer base; indeed, as Confino notes, “what was most evident in the modern appreciation of nature was the relentless commercialization of it.”² The alpine imaginary developed by the tourist industry has so powerfully affected perceptions of the Alps that people all over the world today can still recognize its general contours. Quaint cottages in majestic valleys, fresh-faced children dressed in traditional costume tending happy animals, sparkling mountain streams running through meadows of Edelweiss – all of these iconographic elements associated with the Alps were firmly in place long before the ultimate alpine tourism film, *The Sound of Music*, appeared in 1965. The staying power of these stock characters and landscapes continue to dominate how people imagine the Alps today.

Second, however, identifying the Alps as a *Heimat* demanded that something be done to protect and preserve it. The Alpenverein engaged in the discourse of *Heimat* for this precise reason; if the collective identity of the German and Austrian nations were enshrined in the alpine *Heimat*, and that *Heimat* was under attack, then it had to be protected with the full resources of the nation and its people. The Alpenverein often described their battles over the Alps, whether to prevent the construction of a new railway or to somehow limit the number of tourists allowed to visit particular sites, in terms of national struggle. Although this may have simply been a strategy designed to inflame nationalist sentiment in the service of their cause, there were very real consequences that resulted from the Alpenverein’s campaigns.

² Confino 113.

Some of the casualties in the Alpenverein's drive to "save" the Alps were socialists and Jewish mountaineers. After the Alpenverein, one of the largest alpine organizations was the *Touristenverein "Die Naturfreunde"* (Tourist Club "Friends of Nature," hereafter Naturfreunde). Founded in Vienna in 1895, the Naturfreunde grew quickly into one of many organizations dedicated to workers' sports, hobbies and leisure activities. During the 1920s, however, Naturfreunde members on holiday found themselves asked to pay extra fees at the Alpenverein's alpine huts, if they were allowed to enter at all. As the Weimar Republic approached its final years, the Naturfreunde, like many political organizations opposed to the Nazis, were constantly harassed by Hitler's paramilitary force, the SA, with their members beaten and their properties vandalized and destroyed. Long aligned with the Social Democratic Party in Germany, the Naturfreunde were one of the first organizations to be disbanded after the Nazis came to power.

While the relationship between the bourgeois-oriented Alpenverein and the explicitly socialist Naturfreunde was predictably problematic, the relationship between the Alpenverein and its Jewish members was surprisingly complicated. In one of the darkest chapters in the Alpenverein's history, a coalition of Austrian Alpenverein sections, led by the virulent anti-Semite Eduard Pichl, eventually succeeded in expelling the Jewish Alpenverein section "Donauland." The Jewish mountaineers of Donauland had formed their own section to protest the anti-Semitic policies of the larger Viennese sections, and their eventual expulsion in 1924 sent shockwaves throughout the Alpenverein. Public opinion condemned the Alpenverein for its concessions to the anti-Semites in their midst, and some Alpenverein members were equally horrified by what the club's leadership had done. Nonetheless, the Alpenverein's decision stood, a fact that they were proud to trumpet once the Nazis came to power in 1933.

The exclusion of socialists and Jewish mountaineers points to the ongoing development of an ideal type of mountaineer, one defined by race, class and gender. The ideal mountaineer exhibited the physical and spiritual traits of an idealized German race: physically strong and highly skilled, decisive and rational in his calculations, yet able to appreciate the sublime beauty of the landscape around him. This idealized alpinist was also an educated professional, one who could afford to buy the necessary equipment, travel to the Alps, and spend the requisite time in honing his mountaineering skills; he had read trip reports on the mountains, was aware of international mountaineering developments, could speak fluently with Italian, French and English mountaineers if the occasion presented itself, and could also present his adventures in a lecture or slide show if his achievements warranted it. In other words, the mountaineer was an educated upper-class member of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. Finally, as I intentionally suggest with the male pronouns above, the mountaineer was above all masculine; often described as an invincible soldier or machine, the mountaineer was in many ways a rebuttal of Weimar's New Man: hard instead of soft, serious instead of playful, strong instead of weak.

Yet there was something more going on than just the creeping, inexorable radicalization of a mountaineering organization. The Alpenverein's master narrative faltered in the Weimar Republic, later to become the *only* narrative for mountains and mountaineering after the Nazis came to power in 1933. During the Weimar Republic, the Alpenverein came to view itself as an organization under attack by tourism, capitalism, and enemies both foreign and domestic. The Alpenverein was fast losing its authority as the sole arbiter of alpine representations; the club simply could not reach as broad an audience as the cinemas of Weimar Germany, where the popular genre of the mountain film began to shape the public's perception of what the Alps looked like, what kinds of characters were to be found there, and how one behaved in the Alps. Intense debates

within the Alpenverein's publications, as well as numerous other newspapers and journals dedicated to alpine affairs, reveal the mountaineering community's belief that the mountain films were dangerous to the lay public, that the misrepresentation of the rigors of mountaineering led amateurs to risk their own lives on alpine climbs. The ideal alpine film, according to the Alpenverein, was the documentary; anything else was potentially irresponsible. Yet without the resources to produce and distribute their own films, the Alpenverein had to continue to rely on its traditional modes of representation: essays and fiction in its publications, and lectures and slide shows in Germany's lecture halls. This did not change until after 1933, when, as we shall see in the conflict between a Nazi documentary and a feature film, the tables were finally turned on the entertainment industry in the Alpenverein's favor.

While the Alpenverein attacked the representation of mountains and mountaineering in the cinema, it embraced the literary representations of a genre of trivial literature called the alpine novel. These novels and stories, whether published serially in the alpine press or in book form, appear to have reached a wide international audience within German-speaking Europe. Closely aligned with the *Heimat* genre of literature, alpine literature often looked back with nostalgia to a lost age in the Alps, in which a pristine mountain landscape plays host to morally upstanding peasants. Invariably, modernity arrives in the form of an engineer or construction manager who strikes a compromise with the native villagers in order to ensure the success of his project. These literary works represent imaginary resolutions of very real problems in the Alps. This literature presents a compromise between the dichotomous imperatives of progress and tradition; the Alpenverein's engagement in land-use debates, and their impassioned argument about how much development was too much, finds an advocate in the

conciliatory engineer, a literary figure who manages to bring modernization to remote alpine valleys without destroying either the landscape or traditional ways of life.

Alpine representations, whether in alpine fiction or in the mountain film, alternately affirmed and challenged the Alpenverein's master narrative during the Weimar Republic. With the *Gleichschaltung* of German society and culture after 1933, however, the reactionary elements of the Alpenverein's master narrative – racism, nationalism and militarism – were suddenly and conveniently aligned with the ideological positions of the Nazi state. With the Alpenverein's collaboration, the Nazis systematically shut down all other alpine organizations in Germany, including the Naturfreunde as well as Jewish mountaineering clubs, seizing properties and assets and transferring them to the Alpenverein. A vibrant and diverse culture of mountaineering, with its different topographies of race, class and gender, was rendered monolithic in one fell swoop. The Alpenverein's master narrative of mountaineering, which had struggled against the alternative interpretations of mountains and mountaineering presented in the cultural plurality of the Weimar Republic, suddenly had nothing left to fight.

This development is perhaps best illustrated by three German expeditions to the Himalayan peak of Nanga Parbat, a mountain that was anointed the “German mountain of fate” after tragedy struck German climbers again and again on its deadly slopes. The representations of the 1934 German Nanga Parbat Expedition reveals how quickly the Alpenverein's hegemony over mountaineering was established after the Nazis came to power, and how mountaineering had been elevated to a matter of national pride. The spectacular tragedy that befell the expedition generated several books, including the bestseller *Deutsche am Nanga Parbat (Germans on Nanga Parbat, 1934)*, which went through twelve editions in Germany and was translated into English and French. More importantly, however, a documentary film was salvaged from the expedition's wreckage

and screened at the 1936 Winter Olympics as a propaganda piece meant to inform the world that Germany's mountaineers had arrived on the world stage. All of the elements of the master narrative are on display in the film: a rugged masculinity, heroic struggle, willingness to sacrifice for the nation, irrational glorification of death, and the embrace of what came to be called "the idea of the Himalayas."

As the 1934 German Nanga Parbat Expedition's tragedy slowly unraveled to a horrified public back in Germany, the International Himalaya Expedition, led by the prominent mountaineer Günther Dyhrenfurth, was completing the filming of footage for a feature film entitled *Der Dämon des Himalaja (Demon of the Himalayas, 1935)*. Dyhrenfurth's film, which he dedicated to the memory of the fallen climbers of the Nanga Parbat expedition, followed in the melodramatic footsteps of the mountain films genre. The Alpenverein was outraged and complained that Dyhrenfurth was using the Nanga Parbat tragedy for his own gain. In the Weimar Republic, the Alpenverein's objections to such films had gone unnoticed; in the Third Reich, however, the Alpenverein had the full attention of the totalitarian state. Despite a decent showing at the box office, Dyhrenfurth's film was banned from the German cinema and replaced by the official Nanga Parbat documentary. From 1936 on, the Alpenverein's master narrative went unchallenged within the Third Reich.

In this study of the German-Austrian Alpenverein, text, film and culture converged in the context of the Alpenverein's master narrative. In the media culture of the Weimar Republic, the Alpenverein's master narrative came under attack. It had to compete against the box-office hits of the mountain films and cope with the increasing gains of the commercial tourism industry in the Alps. Until the Nazis came to power, the Alpenverein was unable to consolidate its dominance over the representation of mountains and mountaineering. After 1933, however, the Alpenverein became the

official organization for mountaineering within the Nazi state, and it used its newfound political power to achieve in the Third Reich what it could not in the culture of the Weimar Republic.

Chapter 1: The Alpenverein's Formation and Transformation

In 1865, the so-called “Golden Age” of mountaineering ended with Edward Whymper’s ascent of the Matterhorn. Long the semi-exclusive province of well-heeled British mountaineers, the highest peaks of the Alps had fallen one by one throughout the mid-nineteenth century. The institutional center of Victorian mountaineering was the British Alpine Club, founded in 1857 in London. The first club of its kind in the world, the Alpine Club was an organization dedicated to the wealthy gentlemen who were already actively ‘conquering’ the summits of continental Europe. Successful applicants for membership were required to have climbed a peak of 13,000 feet, which required the financial means to travel to central Europe, purchase proper mountaineering gear, hire a guide, and afford the leisure time necessary for such an adventure. These membership requirements ensured that the Alpine Club’s composition would remain firmly within the boundaries of the upper-middle class.³

The foremost historian of British mountaineering during the Victorian period, Peter Hansen, correlates the rise in mountaineering’s popularity with deeply rooted anxieties concerning masculinity and the prospects of the British Empire. Hansen argues that, from the mid-1850s to the mid-1860s, middle-class English men experienced a “decade of crisis,” leading them to view British society as extremely wealthy but physically weak. These ambitious members of the professional middle classes turned to aggressive pursuits such as mountaineering in order to cultivate and demonstrate physical superiority. Hansen points out that “middle-class mountaineers adopted the languages of exploration and adventure from contemporary explorers in the Arctic and Africa to

³ Bernhard Tschöfen, Berg, Kultur, Moderne. Volkskundliches aus den Alpen (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1999) 15.

describe their climbing,” thereby transforming “the ascent of unclimbed Alpine peaks and passes into representations of British masculinity and imperial ‘conquest.’”⁴

Interest in mountaineering, however, extended far beyond England. There was an explosion of interest in alpinism in the late nineteenth century, as indicated by the increasing fascination with mountaineering and the resources dedicated to it. Documented first ascents of alpine peaks increased exponentially: from 1751 to 1800, there were 86 first ascents; from 1801 to 1850, 210; and from 1851 to 1900, 1,010 peaks fell to rising numbers of mountaineers.⁵ And the British Alpine Club provided an institutional blueprint for mountaineers of other nations; across Europe, new clubs were founded: the Österreichischer Alpenverein (1862); the Schweizer Alpen-Club and the Club Alpino Italiano (both 1863); the Deutscher Alpenverein (1869); the Club Alpin Français (1874).

Each club had its own distinct culture. The Alpine Club in London was an elite organization from the start. Despite its self-representation as a club meant “to facilitate association among those who possess a similarity of taste,” actual membership was limited to men of education, achievement and above all, significant financial means.⁶ Lawyers and businessmen constituted almost half of the Alpine Club’s 823 members from 1857-1900, and more than half of the club’s members had attended university.⁷ The club’s elite character continued well beyond its origins; in 1935, an Alpine Club officer

⁴ Peter Holger Hansen, “Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain,” *The Journal of British Studies* 34.3 (July 1995): 304.

⁵ Jon Mathieu and Simona Boscani Leoni, eds., *Die Alpen! Les Alpes! Zur europäischen Wahrnehmungsgeschichte seit der Renaissance* (Berlin: Lang, 2005) 96. Although mountaineers of other nations participated in the “Erschliessung der Alpen,” British mountaineers were certainly in the majority.

⁶ D.F.O. Dangar and T.S. Blakeney, “The Rise of Modern Mountaineering and the Formation of the Alpine Club,” *Alpine Journal* 62 (1957): 26.

⁷ Hansen 310-311.

described the club as “a unique one – a club for gentleman who also climb.” He then pointed at a street sweeper, adding, “I mean that we would never elect that fellow even if he were the finest climber in the world.”⁸

THE GERMAN ALPENVEREIN, 1869-1873

Unlike its British counterpart, the German Alpenverein styled itself as an egalitarian organization, open to any and all applicants regardless of class. The Alpenverein represented itself as a group of enthusiasts who appreciated mountains and did not require prospective members to have climbing experience. In their first publication, the Alpenverein looked back on their first year and reiterated their founding principles:

The fundamental idea was that the German Alpenverein should be open to everyone who admires the sublime world of the Alps, whether they live in the German Alps, whether they are only able to visit the Alps from time to time; whether they conduct serious research in valleys and gorges, over the green heights to the border of organic life; whether, independently of science, they bring an openness for the unforgettable impressions of the high mountains or have recognized the cathartic and rejuvenating power of mountains, which must be counted among the most beautiful and noble acquisitions of our century. The German Alpenverein should be the organization for all of these people and interests; the club’s publications should share research results, evoke lasting impressions and encourage new adventures in the mountains.⁹

⁸ Scott Russell, “Memoir,” The Making of a Mountaineer, ed. George Ingle Finch, 2nd ed. (Bristol: Arrowsmith, 1988) 10.

⁹ ZDAV (1870): II. “Grundgedanke war, der Deutsche Alpenverein solle alle Verehrer der erhabenen Alpenwelt in sich vereinigen, mögen sie die Deutschen Alpen selbst bewohnen, möge es ihnen auch nur zeitweilig vergönnt sein, diese zu besuchen,- mag sie ernste Forschung in die Täler und Schluchten, über die grünen Höhen bis hinan zur Grenze organischen Lebens treiben,- mögen sie, einer Fachwissenschaft fernstehend, nur offenen Sinn mitbringen für die unvergesslichen Eindrücke der Hochgebirgsnatur, deren läuternde und verjüngende Kraft erkannt zu haben zu den schönsten und edelsten Errungenschaften unseres Jahrhunderts gezählt werden muss. Für sie alle soll der Deutsche Alpenverein das gemeinsame Band sein; er soll durch Wort und Schrift die Resultate der Forschung allgemein verbreiten, jene Eindrücke bleibend fixieren, zu neuer Thätigkeit anregen.”

The Alpenverein described itself as a cultural institution that was interested in alpine research, that appreciated the aesthetic beauty of alpine nature, acknowledged the curative powers of the alpine landscape, and shared all of these discourses through their publications.

The early Alpenverein bore the imprimatur of the bourgeoisie, and especially the educated upper-middle class (*Bildungsbürgertum*). The Alpenverein provided one example, one of many within the associational culture of nineteenth-century Germany, of how bourgeois culture, influenced by the Enlightenment emphasis on universal rights and a commitment to dismantling class boundaries, created institutions to further its interests.¹⁰ The Alpenverein's universal membership policy, as well as its stated purpose(s), created an institution dedicated to the inclusion of anyone, regardless of social background, wealth, profession, gender or mountaineering experience: “[the Alpenverein] demands nothing more from its members; it requires an active interest for the alpine world, not extraordinary achievements; our club is *not a mountaineering club*.”¹¹

THE FORMATION OF THE GERMAN-AUSTRIAN ALPENVEREIN

In 1873, following the formation of the Second German Empire in 1871, the *Österreichischer Alpenverein* (Austrian Alpenverein) and the *Deutscher Alpenverein* (German Alpenverein) joined together to form the *Deutscher und Österreichischer Alpenverein* (German-Austrian Alpine Club, hereafter “Alpenverein”). Despite Austria's

¹⁰ Jürgen Kocka, “Bürgertum und bürgerliche Gesellschaft im 19. Jahrhundert. Europäische Entwicklungen und deutsche Eigenarten,” *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert. Deutschland im europäischen Vergleich* ed. Jürgen Kocka, vol. 1 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1995) 30.

¹¹ *ZDAV* (1870): II. “[der Verein] erhebt keine anderen Ansprüche an seine Mitglieder, er verlangt keine besonderen Leistungen, nur reges Interesse für die Alpenwelt; er ist *kein Verein von Bergsteigern*.” Emphasis in original.

recent exclusion from German national unification under Prussian leadership, the Alpenverein invited the Austrians to participate in the new club's express purpose, which followed from the universal orientation of the German Alpenverein: "to expand upon and circulate knowledge about the Alps, as well as to facilitate travel within the German and Austrian Alps."¹² This "mission statement" effectively augmented the original purpose of the German Alpenverein. In addition to the club's role as an organization promoting the free exchange of information about the alpine world, the newly formed Alpenverein sought to enable travel within the alpine world as well. The Alpenverein began translating their vision of the Alps into practice, blurring the clear political boundary between Germany and Austria by embracing the Alps as a cultural geography common to both empires. The club soon began promoting the construction of walking paths, roads, railways and *Hütte* (alpine huts), all designed to open the Alps to anyone who wished to travel within them.

At the structural level, the Alpenverein was (and still is today) a decentralized association composed of local sections (*Vereinssektionen*). The club grew fastest in areas outside of the Alps; in 1874, one year after the Alpenverein was formed, there were 43 local sections, 13 of which were located in the Alps.¹³ This geographical paradox followed from the Alpenverein's stated purposes – "the distribution of knowledge and the facilitation of Alpine travel" – and its roots in the traditions of the *Bildungsbürgertum*. With its emphasis on the aesthetic perception of mountains, scientific research and travel,

¹² MDÖAV (1908): 219. "... die Kenntnis der Alpen im allgemeinen zu erweitern und zu verbreiten sowie die Bereisung der Alpen Deutschlands und Österreichs zu erleichtern." The excerpt is taken from the 1876 charter of the Deutscher und Österreichischer Alpenverein.

¹³ ZDÖAV (1874): 33. The sections located in the Alps – Allgäu-Immenstadt, Bozen, Innerörtal, Innsbruck, Lienz, Meran, Mittenwald, Mölltal, Imst, Pinzgau, Taufers, Vorarlberg and Zillertal – reported a total membership of 524 in the year 1874. The membership of the entire Alpenverein stood at 3,682. Hence, 86% of Alpenverein members lived outside of the Alps; only 14% resided in the mountains.

the Alpenverein appealed primarily not to alpine villagers, but rather to a “predestined clientele” of educated persons concentrated in Germany’s larger cities.¹⁴

Since the majority of Alpenverein members hailed from Germany and Austria’s major cities, the club’s leadership was correspondingly urban and educated. In 1876, the *Mitteilungen* reported the following statistics for the leaders of 60 individual Alpenverein sections (*Vorstände*):¹⁵

Bearers of the title of ‘Doktor’:	23
Bearers of noble titles:	11
Professors:	12
Public Officials (<i>Beamten</i>):	7
Physicians:	6
Attorneys and Notaries:	4
Preacher:	1
State Representative:	1
Bookstore Owner:	1
Engineer:	1
Factory Director:	1
Forester:	1

Although *Bildungsbürger* occupied the majority of leadership positions within the club, members came from all walks of life. In the first four decades of the Alpenverein’s existence, the number of members exploded along with the profusion of new sections:

Year	Members	Sections
1874:	4,074	46
1884:	13,878	108
1894:	32,163	214
1904:	63,041	307
1914:	102,092	407 ¹⁶

¹⁴ Dagmar Günther, Alpine Quergänge : Kulturgeschichte des bürgerlichen Alpinismus (1870 -1930) (Frankfurt: Campus, 1998) 37.

¹⁵ MDÖAV (1876): 1.

¹⁶ ZDÖAV (1919): 208. Table VI.

Compared to the British Alpine Club's 823 members in 1900, the Alpenverein was a behemoth. The magnitude of the Alpenverein's growth indicates the appeal and success of the club, its publications, and its activities. Heinrich Steinitzer, a prominent member of the Alpenverein, reviewed this progress in an essay written in 1912:

The alpine clubs have unlocked the majesty and beauty of the high mountains for the masses, giving countless numbers of people the opportunity, without prohibitively demanding effort or ... exorbitant costs, to become acquainted with the Alps.¹⁷

The Alpenverein communicated with its membership through its two major publications. The most frequently appearing publication was the *Mitteilungen des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins*, which was published on a semi-monthly basis from 1885 to 1918, and then on a monthly basis thereafter. Intended as a newspaper for members, the *Mitteilungen* contained a vast range of information for those interested in mountains: club events; possibilities for travel, overnight stays and guide services in the Alps; descriptions of hikes; essays on natural history and on alpinism; reflective essays on the meaning of mountaineering and the Alpenverein's mission; reviews of art, literature and films related to mountaineering; and, of course, travel reports. The other main publication of the Alpenverein, the annual *Zeitschrift des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins*, contained essays on recent research on a number of alpine topics. These essays were extended and intensive discussions of scientific research in botany, geology or topography, as well as anthropological or cultural research on various aspects of alpine life. In both of these publications, prominent (and often highly-educated) members of the Alpenverein contributed their thoughts, researches and experiences as mountaineers, citizens and professionals.

¹⁷ MDÖAV (1912): 207. "Die Alpenvereine haben für die Masse der Menschen die Größe und Schönheit des Hochgebirges erschlossen und Unzähligen die Möglichkeit gegeben, sie ohne übergroße Mühe und – last not least – ohne übergroße Kosten kennen zu lernen."

Although the Alpenverein's self-styled mission emphasized its conception as an egalitarian organization open to all, the discourse constructed within the self-representational publications of the club radiated from a socio-cultural elite.¹⁸ This elite body of Alpenverein members was comprised of exemplary representatives of the *Bildungsbürgertum*, the educated, upwardly mobile social class of Wilhelmine Germany. They were also the authors whose texts shaped the discourse of mountains and mountaineering. In the pages of the *Mitteilungen* and *Zeitschriften*, authors were predominantly male and highly educated, many of them having earned the titles of Professor and Doktor. While the right to submit materials for publication was formally extended to the Alpenverein's entire membership, the privilege of publication appears to have been the preserve of an educated few within the Alpenverein. And as the Alpenverein began to experience growing pangs in the early twentieth century, the pages of the *Mitteilungen* and *Zeitschriften* were often filled with arguments and debates about the future direction of the Alpenverein.

TOURISM AND THE GERMAN-AUSTRIAN ALPENVEREIN

Shortly before the turn of the century, some mountaineers within the Alpenverein began to call into question the club's universal orientation. These mountaineers believed that the Alpenverein's explosive growth, and its success in enabling travel and tourism within the Alps, had created a mass phenomenon and unleashed "swarms of tourists" into formerly idyllic, peaceful mountain valleys.¹⁹ In a lecture delivered to the Akademischer

¹⁸ Günther 29-30.

¹⁹ Joseph Enzensperger, *Ein Bergsteigerleben. Alpine Aufsätze und Vorträge, Reisebriefe und Kerguelen-Tagebuch von Josef Enzensperger*, ed. Akademischer Alpenverein München, 2nd. ed. (Munich: Alpenfreund-Verlag A.-G., 1924) 57. In the context of mountaineering, the term "Tourist" has a double meaning. It can describe someone who conducts high-altitude tours, which is an especially demanding, multi-day form of mountaineering, and it can also mean a person who is traveling for leisure and entertainment. Around the turn of the century, Alpenverein publications began to refer to mountaineers as

Alpenverein München, a Munich section of the Alpenverein dominated by mountaineers who considered themselves elite climbers, Josef Enzensperger complained about the Alpenverein's role in promoting mass tourism:

These days, during the tourist season, there are certain areas in the eastern Alps, such as the Dolomites, the Zillertal or the Ortler group, where it is impossible to go climbing without running the risk of being stabbed by someone else's crampons, impaling yourself on the ice axe of the person next to you, being showered with a dozen rocks of varying caliber by an otherwise agreeable climbing party... The most challenging peaks have been made considerably higher with piles of eggshells, broken glass and wrapping paper for sausage.²⁰

Enzensperger's lament was echoed by the prominent alpinist Eugen Guido Lammer in Vienna, who in 1908 described the "almost pathological flooding of the mountains."²¹ The imagery of unhealthy floods of swarming tourists, the metaphorical equivalent of disease-bearing parasites infecting the otherwise curative landscape of the Alps, signaled a significant challenge to the Alpenverein's universal orientation. By encouraging and facilitating interest in and access to the Alps, the Alpenverein, according to some mountaineers, was destroying the very landscape that it meant to honor and preserve.

Indeed, the Alpenverein was beginning to differentiate among those members who "understood" alpinism and those who did not. One commentator observed "that more and more elements are infiltrating the Alpenverein whose interests do not accord

"Hochtouristen," or "high-altitude tourists," thereby imposing a level of linguistic differentiation on the varying levels of difficulty assigned to hiking in the Alps.

²⁰ Enzensperger 57. "Heutzutage kann man in der Saison in gewissen Gebieten der Ostalpen, wie den Dolomiten, dem Zillertal und der Ortler-Gruppe, keine Tour mehr machen, ohne alle Augenblicke Gefahr zu laufen, daß man sich auf ein Steigeisen niederläßt, an dem Eispickel seines Nebenmenschen sich spießt, von einer lebenswürdigen vorankletternden Partie ein Dutzend Steine jeglichen Kalibers auf den Kopf bekommt [...] Die schwersten Gipfel sind durch die Haufen von Eierschalen, Glasscherben, Wurstpapieren, [...], nicht unbeträchtlich erhöht worden."

²¹ Eugen Guido Lammer, Jungborn. Bergfahrten und Höhengedanken eines einsamen Pfadsuchers (Munich: R. Rother, 1923) 259. "... die fast krankhafte Überflutung des Gebirges..."

with our ideals.”²² The popularization of Alpine travel led some to argue for discretion when it came to introducing new travelers to the Alps:

We shouldn't simply invite more and more people into the Alps. It would suffice to attract those whose hearts regularly turn to the mountains, who are always seeking a closer connection to Alpine nature... We shouldn't assume that mountaineering will, without exception, make *every* person happy...²³

As the number of visitors to the Alps skyrocketed at the turn of the century, Alpenverein members viewed newcomers with suspicion and distrust. Some felt that the Alpenverein's policy of making the Alps accessible to all had compromised the ideal mountain experience by crowding formerly lonely peaks with amateur climbers and packing alpine huts with beer-swilling leisure hikers. This perception of loss led to calls to downsize the club and implement measures that could somehow control who could travel within the Alps.

There were some, however, who disagreed with the calls for reducing the membership rolls and limiting access to the Alps. The Allgäu-Immenstadt section of the Alpenverein, for example, wrote in their annual report that

Here and there we hear complaints that the friend of nature (*Naturfreund*), who has come to the majestic world of the mountains seeking silence, simplicity and spiritual calm, does not always find himself in the company of like-minded persons. Yet the mountains ennoble all who come, not just a select few, and they should remain accessible to all ... therefore, the more people that hear our call and come to visit us, the more joyful we should be. If our Alpenverein wants to continue expanding, then may the Allgäu-Immenstadt section grow along with it.²⁴

²² MDÖAV (1907): 263. "...daß immer mehr Elemente in den Alpenverein eindringen, die dessen Geist innerlich durchaus fernstehen."

²³ MDÖAV (1908): 94. "Es gilt also, nicht etwa immer noch mehr Menschen in die Berge hineinzulocken, als vielmehr die Herzen jener, welche regelmäßig die Berge aufsuchen, immer enger mit der alpinen Natur zu verknüpfen, (...). Wir dürfen nicht glauben, daß *jeder* Mensch unbedingt durch den Alpinismus glücklich gemacht werden muß; (...)."

²⁴ Jahresbericht Sektion Allgäu-Immenstadt 1907: 11. "Und da und dort wird geklagt, der Naturfreund, der zum geistigen Ausruhen Stille und Einfachheit in der herrlichen Bergwelt suche, begegne nicht mehr immer Gleichgesinnten. Wenigen jedoch soll deshalb nicht allein zugänglich sein, was fast alle erhebt, die

There was more at stake, though, than keeping the Alps open so that everyone could experience the sublime beauty of the mountains. As the largest alpine organization in the world, the Alpenverein had to keep in mind what their membership numbers, and especially their membership dues, had made possible:

I believe a reduction in membership would not be beneficial, because the size of our budget offers very obvious advantages. For example, in addition to the generosity of the central committee and the general assembly in practical matters, we also have the splendid layout of our annual publication, with its highly valuable maps and illustrations that are the envy of the editors and members of the other alpine clubs.²⁵

In addition to its cost-intensive publications, the financial strength of the Alpenverein enabled the club to build alpine huts, maintain hiking paths, and finance lectures and other events for the club's membership. The Alpenverein's explosive growth had brought in enormous sums of money, which translated into influence and clout in the Alps. In 1873, the Alpenverein had reported an annual income of 25,000 RM; at the outbreak of World War I in 1914, that figure had reached 725,000 RM.²⁶

Membership in the Alpenverein certainly had its advantages, and there were some who suspected these new members of ulterior motives; some believed that the astonishing growth of the club included applicants who only wanted to exploit the benefits of membership. Criticism of the Alpenverein's expansion took on explicit tones of class

kommen. (...), und darum, je mehr unserm Rufe folgen, je mehr uns besuchen, desto mehr soll es uns freuen. Möge unser Alpenverein immer mehr noch sich ausdehnen, möge mit ihm sich weiter ausdehnen unsere Sektion Allgäu-Immenstadt."

²⁵ Günther Oskar Dyhrenfurth, "Gedanken über die künftigen Aufgaben des D.u.Ö. Alpenvereins," MDÖAV (1908): 33. "Für ersprießlich halte ich eine Verkleinerung der Mitgliederzahl aber deshalb nicht, weil unser großes Budget doch sehr augenfällige Vorteile bietet, so z.B. neben der Freigiebigkeit die Zentral-Ausschuß und Generalversammlung in den praktischen Aufgaben beweisen können, die herrliche Ausstattung unseres Jahrbuchs mit höchst wertvollen Karten und mit einem Bilderschmuck, um den uns Redakteure und Mitglieder anderer alpiner Vereine sehr beneiden."

²⁶ ZDÖAV (1919): 212.

antagonism as some commentators derided the newcomers as a wave of “moral proletarianization.”²⁷

There is a certain consolation in our rising membership numbers, but whoever looks a bit closer will reach the unavoidable conclusion that a portion of this growth – I would like to say – should be described as specious prosperity (*Scheinblüte*). A large number of our new members – and not all of them by any means, I know – have joined the Alpenverein for a number of reasons. Whether it be the material advantages of membership, or whether they expect the Alpenverein to promote a certain cause that lies near to their heart, these things have nothing to do with mountaineering proper.²⁸

In the midst of the Alpenverein’s dramatic growth, the club’s overall membership came under increasing scrutiny. Shortly after World War I, the Alpenverein began to eject members according to a wide range of criteria.

The overwhelming majority of expulsions affect members who have not paid their dues. There are some cases in which individuals are expelled because of personal differences with the club or section leadership. In a very few cases, members were ejected because of dishonorable or un-alpine behavior.²⁹

“Un-alpine behavior” was left quite vague, but some instances of those who ended up on the club’s “blacklists” suggest what kind of infractions could earn a member lifelong exclusion from the Alpenverein. One member of the Vienna section “Donauland” tore out a page from the summit register on the Grohmannspitze, which was signed by the

²⁷ MDÖAV (1924): 210. “... eine Gilde von alpinen Proleten ... moralische Proletarisierung...”

²⁸ MDÖAV (1923): 101. “Wohl liegt ein gewisser Trost in der erneut zunehmenden Zahl unserer Mitglieder, wer aber schärfer zusieht, wird sich nicht verhehlen können, daß ein Teil dieses Zuwachses – ich möchte sagen – als *Scheinblüte* zu bezeichnen ist. Eine große Zahl der Neuaufgenommenen, bei weitem nicht alle – das weiß ich – sind dem Alpenverein beigetreten, sei es, weil sie sich von der Mitgliedschaft materiellen Vorteil erhofften, sei es, weil sie im Alpenverein eine Förderung von Zielen erwarten, die ihnen am Herzen liegen, die aber an sich nicht Sache des Alpinismus sind.”

²⁹ Vereinsnachrichten des Hauptausschusses des DÖAV (1925): 60. “Beim Ausschluß von Mitgliedern handelt es sich in der weitaus überwiegenden Zahl um Mitglieder, die wegen Nichtbezahlung des Vereinsbeitrages, in einzelnen Fällen um solche, die wegen persönlicher Differenzen mit der Vereins(Sektions-)leitung ausgeschlossen wurden. In verhältnismäßig ganz wenigen Fällen erfolgt ein Ausschluß wegen ehrenrührigen oder unalpinen Verhaltens.”

legendary mountaineer Paul Preuß.³⁰ A member of the section “Bergland” complained about the mountain rescue service (*Bergwacht*),³¹ and a member of the Munich section was blacklisted because he did not return the key to an alpine hut.³²

Although such offenses were hardly criminal, they violated the unwritten code of mountaineering, and Alpenverein officials, in their attempt to trim the membership rolls, had decided to begin making examples of troublemakers. To this end, the Alpenverein began publishing not only their own blacklists, which prevented those named there from ever being able to join any Alpenverein section, but also those of other alpine organizations, including the Naturfreunde and the *Österreichischer Touristenklub* (Austrian Tourist Club). The ostensible reason for doing so was to make sure that poorly behaved members expelled from other clubs would be able to exercise their corruptive influence in the Alpenverein.³³

Nevertheless, the Alpenverein continued to define itself along remarkably egalitarian lines, dedicated to opening the mountains for the benefit of all. In order to fulfill this goal, the Alpenverein had constructed numerous huts throughout the Alps, established hiking trails, installed cables and ladders to facilitate ascents of difficult peaks, encouraged the construction of roads and railways, and printed their own maps and travel literature. Although the majority of members hailed from the middle class, the Alpenverein was unique in its inclusivity and universalism. While there were differences

³⁰ Vereinsnachrichten des Hauptausschusses des DÖAV (1922): 3.

³¹ Vereinsnachrichten des Hauptausschusses des DÖAV (1923): 12.

³² Vereinsnachrichten des Hauptausschusses des DÖAV (1924): 3.

³³ Günther 83. “Im expressionistischen Untergangs- und Aufbruchspathos der Vorkriegszeit interessiert ‘Krieg’ dabei nicht als politische, militärische, ökonomische Wirklichkeit, sondern ist wie ‘Alpinismus’ eine poetische Chiffre für das reizvolle ‘ganz andere,’ meint Aufbruch, Begeisterung, Lebenssteigerung, Abenteuer, soziale Entgrenzung, die Möglichkeit, eine bedeutsame Existenz zu führen...”

of opinion about how exclusive the Alpenverein should be, and what form future development should take, it is fair to say that the club retained its overall egalitarianism and populist orientation, at least until the fateful year of 1914.

THE ALPENVEREIN IN WORLD WAR I

The Alpenverein underwent a powerful and thorough transformation in the crucible of World War I. While there had always been nationalist and conservative elements within the Alpenverein's ranks, the experience of WW I caused a fundamental shift in the culture and rhetoric of mountaineering. From the beginning of WW I to Germany's surrender in 1918, the Alpenverein restyled itself as an organization dedicated to supplying the Germany army with soldiers hardened by the rigors of mountaineering. The Alpenverein imagined its contribution of mountaineer-soldiers as indispensable to the ever-elusive, yet tantalizingly close, military victory promised by the German armed forces. WW I provided the Alpenverein with an opportunity to prove the worth of mountaineering and to showcase the values inculcated in the ideal mountaineer: fortitude, courage, strength and skill. The revaluation of the mountaineer, from a physically powerful, nature-loving individual to a thoroughly nationalist, militarized defender of the *Heimat*, positioned the Alpenverein as an organization dedicated to the production of an invincible, masculine Germany. With the end of WW I, the Alpenverein's self-representation suffered a profound crisis that would not fully recover until a former Austrian corporal took the reins of the German government on 20 January 1933.

When World War I broke out in August 1914, Germany, along with the rest of Europe, welcomed the conflict with heady enthusiasm. The Alpenverein also embraced WW I as an exciting event; as the cultural historian Dagmar Günther notes, the conflict promised to rejuvenate a culture in decline:

In the expressionistic pathos of gloom and doom that dominated the prewar period, “war” was not a political, military or economic reality. Rather, like “alpinism,” war was a poetic cipher for the attractions of something “completely different”; it meant an awakening, excitement, the intensification of life, adventure, the erasure of social boundaries, the possibility of leading a meaningful life...³⁴

The opportunity to “lead a meaningful existence” also provided an opportunity to assign historical significance to the unification of the German and Austrian Alpenverein in 1873, as a precursor to the German-Austrian alliance on the battlefields of World War I:

To all of our members! ... We enthusiastically answer the call of our Kaiser. The struggle with the elements of the alpine world have steeled us for battle against our enemies and against the hardships to come... Almost half a century ago, Germans and Austrians, united by their love for our Alps, joined together in the German-Austrian Alpenverein. Today, the peoples of both empires fight shoulder to shoulder against our common enemy.³⁵

The heady militarism of the Alpenverein’s publications affected not only what was written, but also the very script in which it was written. One way in which the Alpenverein expressed their national pride was with their decision to publish the *Mitteilungen* and *Zeitschriften* in the old Germanic *Fraktur* alphabet: “the world has watched the unheard-of, powerful upsurge of German power, and we want to announce to the world our thoughts and deeds in a script that belongs only to us.”³⁶ Aside from the

³⁴ Günther 244. “Im expressionistischen Untergangs- und Aufbruchspathos der Vorkriegszeit interessiert ‘Krieg’ dabei nicht als politische, militärische, ökonomische Wirklichkeit, sondern ist wie ‘Alpinismus’ eine poetische Chiffre für das reizvolle ‘ganz andere,’ meint Aufbruch, Begeisterung, Lebenssteigerung, Abenteuer, soziale Entgrenzung, die Möglichkeit, eine bedeutsame Existenz zu führen...”

³⁵ MDÖAV (1914): 201. “An unsere Mitglieder! ... Begeistert folgen wir alle dem Rufe unseres Kaisers. Der Kampf mit den Gewalten der Alpennatur hat uns gestählt für den Kampf mit unseren Feinden und gegen die Mühsal der kommenden Zeit. ... Vor bald einem halben Jahrhundert haben sich Deutsche und Österreicher begeistert in der Liebe zu unseren Alpen vereint im Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenverein: heute kämpfen die Völker beider Reiche Schulter an Schulter gegen den gemeinschaftlichen Feind.”

³⁶ MDÖAV (1914): 230. “Hat die Welt mit Staunen den unerhört gewaltigen Aufschwung deutscher Kraft gesehen, so wollen wir ihr nun auch unsere Gedanken und unsere Taten in jener Schrift künden, die nur uns eigentümlich ist.”

symbolic gesture of publishing in *Fraktur*, the Alpenverein was also committed to supporting the war effort, supplying both soldiers and supplies. In the pages of the *Mitteilungen* and *Zeitschriften*, Alpenverein members could read about where to volunteer and, if they could not serve as soldiers, where to donate “alpine equipment, wool clothing and Alpenverein maps”; such calls for donations apparently met with great success.³⁷

Throughout the ranks of the Alpenverein, there was broad agreement that the war would revive Germany from its turn-of-the-century malaise, forcing a return to the imagined traditions of Germanic superiority and vitality.³⁸ The Alpenverein explicitly described the war in terms of rebirth, an opportunity for Germany to realize a glorious historical mission: “and this war is a return to the source, in that it preserves the simplest and self-evident qualities of our Volk... This holy war, in which we must protect our existence, our historical mission.”³⁹ The Alpenverein envisioned Germany not only as the victim of foreign aggression, but also as the savior of Europe: “... our warriors fight not only for Volk and fatherland, but also for all of Europe, also for those nations that slander us, are hostile to us, and threaten us with weapons, against barbarism.”⁴⁰

³⁷ MDÖAV (1916): 115. “...Aufrufe um Widmung von alpinem Rüstzeug, von Wollsachen und Alpenvereinskarten, Aufrufe, die in den Kreisen der Mitglieder ein warmes Echo fanden und von schönen Erfolgen begleitet waren.”

³⁸ See George Mosse, The Crisis of German Ideology. Intellectual Origins of the Third Reich (New York: Schocken Books, 1981): 67-87.

³⁹ MDÖAV (1914): 230. “Und ein Zurückgehen zur Quelle ist ebenso dieser Krieg, in dem es die einfachsten und selbstverständlichsten Güter unseres Volkes zu wahren gilt, ... dieser heilige Krieg, in dem wir unseren Bestand, unsere geschichtliche Aufgabe zu schützen haben.”

⁴⁰ MDÖAV (1914): 231. “... so kämpfen heute unsere Krieger nicht nur für Volk und Vaterland, sondern für ganz Europa, auch für diejenigen Völker, die uns verleumden, anfeinden und mit Waffen bedrohen, gegen die Barbarei.”

Yet what exactly did Germans mean with such phrases as “the source of our national values” or “barbarism” in the context of early twentieth-century Europe? Günther argues that these terms may have been defined by their opposites: “war and alpinism were prescribed as antidotes to urbanized, overrefined, formalized, conventionalized, empty civilization, and were conceived of as guideposts to the pure source of national power (*Volkskraft*).”⁴¹ In the specific context of alpinism, mountaineers viewed the war as an opportunity to prove that mountaineering was an activity that trained young men for battle and inculcated national values of honor, sacrifice and fortitude. Far from a leisure activity or sport, mountaineering was re-imagined as a preparatory school for war.

Mountaineering became a metaphor of national ascent, and its practitioners were cast as prototypes of the ideal German man. The inherent risks of mountaineering, the rewards of physical exertion, the enjoyment of the alpine landscape – all of these elements of the mountaineer’s craft were depersonalized, idealized and placed in the service of the nation:

The *ideals* that call the mountaineer into the world of rock and glaciers, that drive him to risk his life to conquer an unvanquished peak, that let him feel the exquisite sensations of loneliness in his struggle against overpowering nature – are these not the ideals of a *warrior*? And does he not know, like the soldier on the field of battle, undaunted courage and the highest possible intensity of feeling, even in the face of death?⁴²

⁴¹ Günther 246. “Krieg und Alpinismus werden als Gegengift zur städtischen, überfeinerten, formalisierten, konventionalisierten, leeren Zivilisation verordnet und als Wegweiser zum reinen Ursprung der ‘Volkskraft’ wirksam.”

⁴² MDÖAV (1914): 230. “Die *Ideale*, die ihn in die Fels- und Gletscherwelt rufen, die ihn antreiben, das Leben einzusetzen, um einen unbezwungenen Felsturm zu besiegen, die ihn im Kampf mit der übermächtigen Natur aller Kräfte der Persönlichkeit und die zartesten und feinsten Gefühle der Einsamkeit empfinden lassen – sind es nicht die Ideale eines *Kämpfers*? Und kennt er nicht wie der Krieger in der Schlacht, den unverzagten Mut und die Steigerung des Lebensgefühls zu seinem höchsten Schwunge, gerade im Angesicht des Todes?” Emphasis in original.

Such representations of the fearless mountain climber suggest the ways in which the Alpenverein imagined its role in national culture and in the war. The necessary values of the mountaineer – idealism, risking one’s life, showing “undaunted courage ... even in the face of death” – applied not only on the battlefield, but also in everyday life; as one observer commented, “when the mountaineer exchanges his ice axe for the sword, his work remains dedicated to the same ideal. It is cultural work, here as there.”⁴³

One part of this “cultural work” was the publication of reports from the front. War reportage dominated the pages of the Alpenverein’s publications from 1914 to 1919. The club encountered some resistance from the military authorities, who did not want to give away the positions of fighting units on the front, yet the military also recognized the value of presenting the war to a mass audience:

The selection of content was difficult, insofar that essays that illustrate the struggle, life and horrors of mountain warfare – which is what all mountaineers want to read about right now – are suffering the censor’s pen. Despite this, thanks to the cooperation of the highest military officials, a number of these essays will be published in the *Mitteilungen* and the *Zeitschrift*.⁴⁴

These essays, which described life on the alpine front, translated the war for the home front. The authors of these reports described the war in terms of adventure, camaraderie and excitement, minimizing the hardships and deaths of high-altitude warfare.

Gustav Renker, to whom we will return in chapter six, published two wartime essays in the *Mitteilungen* that preceded a long and successful career as an author of alpine novels. Already a member of the Alpenverein, Renker entered the war in 1914 at

⁴³ MDÖAV (1914): 230. “Wenn der Alpinist jetzt den Pickel mit dem Schwert vertauscht, so bleibt seine Arbeit dem gleichen Ideal geweiht. Es ist Kulturarbeit hier wie dort.”

⁴⁴ MDÖAV (1917): 155. “Die Auswahl des Inhalts war insofern schwierig, als Aufsätze, die den Kampf, das Leben und Treiben der Feldgrauen im Hochgebirge veranschaulichen und von allen Bergsteigern zurzeit am meisten gewünscht werden, unter Zensurbehinderungen leiden. Trotzdem konnte, dank dem Entgegenkommen der obersten Militärbehörden, in der ‘Zeitschrift’ und in den ‘Mitteilungen’ eine Anzahl solcher Aufsätze gebracht werden.”

the age of twenty-five and fought on the southern alpine front against Italy. His wartime writings described life on the front as a grand yet surreal adventure, juxtaposing the beauty of the Alps with the ongoing war:

We laid down on a boulder and looked around. The night was magical, with flowing, soft silver strands of mist lying upon the mountains; dark, formless cliffs above us and adventurous night troopers on the ridge. The depth of the valley below was an immense black abyss. And quiet! Was there even a war on? Ping! Ping! came the answer.⁴⁵

The evocation of the sublime alpine landscape, interrupted by a harmless ricochet of bullets, paints a picture of war as an expedition with playful opponents. The night serves as the context of dreamy contemplation, calling to mind more a romantic painting than a scene from a war.

The mountain landscape also provides the background for scenes of fearful anticipation in which Renker presents the war as an initiation into masculinity, a rite of passage: “Forward. As fast as we could in the quivering moonlight, we moved forward, ascending, descending. I trembled with expectation, a strange prickly feeling, like before the first duel – the baptism by fire.”⁴⁶ With “quivering moonlight,” we again have the imagery of the romantic era, a landscape of occlusion and mystery. The rites of initiation, related first to aristocratic duels of honor and then to the religious overtones of a baptism, assume dimensions of both social class and spirituality.

⁴⁵ MDÖAV (1916): 75. “Auf einem Felsblock ließen wir uns nieder und sahen uns um. Zauberhaft war diese Nacht – als wenn flutende, weiche Schleier aus Silberfäden über den Bergen liegen würden; dunkle, gestaltungslose Wände über uns und abenteuerliche Nachtreiter auf den Graten. Die Tiefe des Tales unter uns aber ein ungeheurer schwarzer Schlund. Und Stille! War denn Krieg? Peng! Peng! klang’s zur Antwort.”

⁴⁶ MDÖAV (1916): 75. “Also vorwärts. So rasch es das unsicher zitternde Mondlicht zuließ, schritten wir hin, hügelab, hügelab. Die Erwartung zitterte in mir, ein seltsam prickelndes Gefühl, wir vor der ersten Mensur – die Feuertaufe.”

Undergoing the “baptism by fire,” Renker suggests, also levels the playing field of class. In the following anecdote, Renker relates how the war upends traditional notions of class and privilege, creating a community of equals:

Lieutenant d.R. Milac, the commander of some lonely position at 2272 meters, greeted me; a wonderful-smelling schnitzel and a warm tea were already on the table for me. I involuntarily laughed; had anyone told me a year ago that I would have been served schnitzel and tea on some unnamed mountain ridge, I would have laughed in their face. And today, I found it completely in order. The war has changed everything in the mountains, everything.⁴⁷

Such an episode goes beyond the representations of camaraderie in the trenches common in World War I literature. Renker’s encounter with Lieutenant Milac suggests not only equality of privilege, but also inversion; in the mountain war, officers serve the soldier-mountaineers. As Renker notes elsewhere, skill beats rank any day: any soldier who has alpine experience “is master and ruler up there from day one, whether he is an officer or an enlisted man.”⁴⁸

Renker’s second dispatch from the battlefield, entitled “*Bergsteiger im Kriege*” (“Mountaineers at War”), explicitly addressed how the experience of war proved the mountaineer’s superiority, both in terms of soldiering and citizenry. Echoing other authors in the Alpenverein’s publications, Renker described mountaineering as a training program for warriors:

Mountain climbing was a hard, serious preparatory school for war. In the field, ice axes and climbing boots became just as important as rifle and bayonet, and

⁴⁷ MDÖAV (1916): 75. “Oberleutnant d.R. Milac, der Kommandant jener einsamen, 2272 m hohen Stellung, begrüßte mich, ein duftendes Schnitzel und warmer Tee standen schon bereit. Ich mußte unwillkürlich lachen; wer mir noch vor einem Jahre gesagt hätte, daß ich auf dieser ehemals so unbekanntem Scharte mit Schnitzel und Tee bewirtet würde, den hätte ich glattweg ausgelacht. Und heute – ich fand’s ganz selbstverständlich. Der Krieg hat alles, alles in den Bergen umgewertet.”

⁴⁸ MDÖAV (1917): 53. “...der ist da oben von vorherein Meister und Gebieter, sei er nun Offizier oder Mannschaftsperson.”

whoever was handy with a climbing rope had a big advantage over his comrades.⁴⁹

Renker also addressed critics of mountaineering and those who, before the war, had made fun of him whenever he headed off for the peaks. Renker's tone here is one of gloating superiority:

A wonderful people (*Volk*) reside up there. Old, grizzled men with leathery brown faces, irregular military forces (*Landsturm*) who had reported for the hard, dogged defense in the mountains, along with men folk, ensigns, cadets and downy bearded militia lieutenants. But they were all mountaineers. This was the guild of the ice axe and the climbing boots – the same people who were the object of derision among the safe bourgeois Philistines who, as they enjoyed their comfortable morning coffee, made fun of mountaineering as the absolute height of stupidity and idiocy – yet the mountaineers are master up here.⁵⁰

By engaging the binary of “those above” and “those below,” Renker draws a clear distinction between the soft finery of civilization in the lowlands and the hardened, patriotic mountaineer. There are two masculinities at play here: the “safe bourgeois Philistines,” those products of overrefinement and decadence, and “the guild” of mountaineers, an exemplary corps of simple, loyal fighters who are short on words and long on deeds.

Renker believed that the war took the already hardened mountaineer and turned him into a fighting machine. He describes the war as a fatherly teacher:

More than anywhere else, the worth of a person and his deeds mean something in the mountains. The war has taken on a patriarchal, individual character. This is

⁴⁹ MDÖAV (1917): 55. “Das Bergsteigen war eine harte, ernste Vorschule des Krieges. Pickel und Kletterschuh wurden im Felde ebenso wichtig wie Gewehr und Bajonett, und wer mit den Kniffen der Seiltechnik vertraut war, der hat nun vor seinen Kameraden einen großen Vorsprung voraus.”

⁵⁰ MDÖAV (1917): 53. “Wunderliches Volk haust dort oben. Alte, graubereiste Männer mit lederharten, braunen Gesichtern, Landsturmeute, die der Dienst zu harter, zäher Verteidigung auf die Berge gestellt hat, und Mannsleut, Fähnriche, Kadetten und flaumbärtige Landsturmeutnants. Aber sie alle sind Bergsteiger. Die Zunft von Pickel und Kletterschuh, die vordem der sichere Spießbürger verlachte, deren Tun ihm beim behaglichen Genuß des Morgenkaffees als der Gipfelpunkt menschlicher Dummheit und Leichtsinnes erschien, sie herrschen hier.”

not to say that the war is comfortable and bloodless like the battles of the good old days ... but the war has become singular here, more personal.⁵¹

The lessons learned by the soldier-mountaineers are not imparted by terror and tragedy, but rather in a playful spirit:

It wasn't useless after all that we spent our free hours in the summers exercising among the boulders instead of lying around in the barracks. These playful battles against the forces of the mountain created fellows who could withstand the terrors of winter.⁵²

Even in battle, Renker and his fellow soldiers maintain an air of invincibility, describing the rigors of battle in the terms of a difficult climb in the Alps:

Once we almost got caught in a bad way ... Hissing and whirring, the grenades floated over us; sometimes one would come in deep and rip a gaping hole in the body of our proud mountain ... I could not remember ever completing a more exciting climbing tour.⁵³

By depicting war as an alpine adventure, Renker minimizes the dangers and risks involved, creating a gallant storyline rather than realistic reportage.

Renker was not alone in representing the war as a grand adventure. Major Alfred Steinitzer, who also fought on the alpine front, described how the nightly patrols “resulted in frequent skirmishes with enemy forces in which we were successful; each encounter was a special, often adventurous episode, that excited all of the men.”⁵⁴ And as

⁵¹ MDÖAV (1917): 53. “Mehr denn anderswo gilt in den Bergen die Tat und der Wert der Person. Der Krieg nimmt hier einen patriarchalischen Einzelcharakter an. Aber nicht, daß er gemütlich und blutleer würde wie Kämpfe der guten, alten Zeit ... Nur vereinzelter ist der Krieg hier geworden, persönlicher.”

⁵² MDÖAV (1917): 57. “Nutzlos war es nicht, wenn wir unsere freie Stunden des Sommers im frischen Felsturnen verwendeten, statt untätig in den Unterküften zu liegen. Aus dem spielerischen Kampfe mit den Berggewalten sind Kerle hervorgegangen, die sich nun auch dem Wintergrausen entgegenstemmen können.”

⁵³ MDÖAV (1917): 57. “Einmal hätte es uns fast übel erwischt. ... Fauchend und surrend glitten die Granaten knapp über uns weg, manchmal kam eine zu tief und riß ein klaffendes Loch in den Leib unseres stolzen Berges. ... Eine aufregendere Klettertour habe ich meines Wissens noch nicht gemacht.”

⁵⁴ MDÖAV (1916): 191. “Die Patrouillentätigkeit der Kompagnien führte zu zahlreichen Patrouillengefechten, die sämtlich erfolgreich waren, jedes eine besondere, oft abenteuerliche Episode, die die Leute begeisterte.”

one soldier wrote, the tension in the field generated an atmosphere of intoxicating excitement:

Listen! There was a metallic sound. It seemed to be the soft clang of steel, either an ice axe or an axe, like the cutting of steps into the iced-over slope. Two marksmen peer carefully over the edge of their emplacement. They listen tensely, holding their breath, their hand behind their ear to help them hear better. After a while, one of them points to the southwest. That's where the noise is coming from. The second marksman swings over the edge of their position without a sound. He is wearing a heavy snow jacket, like Siegfried's magic cloak of invisibility⁵⁵... The dagger and hand grenades are his only weapons. He creeps carefully down the shimmering snowy surface to the southwest. White on white. The other marksman listens on. Frightful minutes pass by. The quiet clanking of the axe and the whirring sound of ice breaking continue. Then ... a short gasping scream, that immediately trails off. Then a profound silence. The pious Tyrolean next to me crosses himself. 'Have mercy, o Lord, on this poor soul!' he whispers.⁵⁶

The author incorporates all of the elements of an adventure story, rendering a wartime killing into an episode of literary suspense; the danger of the hunt, and the invisibility of both the hunter and the hunted, activate the imagination. As in many of the Alpenverein's publications about the war, the details surrounding the confrontation are more important than the confrontation itself: the cling-clang of a climber's axe, the stealthy movements of the marksmen, the scream followed by silence. Such narratives have an odd way of distracting the reader from the fact that someone was just stabbed to death with a dagger.

⁵⁵ This is a reference to Siegfried, the hero of the old Germanic legend of the Nibelungen, which also formed the basis for Richard Wagner's famous opera cycle, *Der Ring des Nibelungen*.

⁵⁶ MDÖAV (1916): 77. "Horch! Ein metallisches Geräusch erklingt. Das leise Klirren des Stahles eines Eispickels oder einer Axt scheint es zu sein, die vermutlich Stufen in den vereisten Hang schlägt. Zwei Schützen erheben die Köpfe vorsichtig aus ihren Deckungen. Sie lauschen gespannt, mit angehaltenem Atem, die Hand an der Ohrmuschel, um besser zu hören. Nach einer Weile zeigt der eine gegen Südwesten. Von dort her kommt das Geräusch. Der zweite schwingt sich lautlos über die Brüstung der Deckung. Er hat den Schneemantel um, der ist hier für ihn Siegfrieds Tarnkappe, um deren Besitz so mancher seufzt. Dolch und Handgranaten sind seine einzigen Waffen. Vorsichtig kriecht er auf der schimmernden Schneefläche gegen Südwest abwärts. Weiß in weiß. Der andere horcht weiter. Angstvolle Minuten vergehen. Das leise Klirren der Axt und das Surren der Eissplitter dauert an. Dann ... ein kurzer röchelnder Angstschrei, der gleich verhallt. Tiefe Stille. Der fromme Tiroler oben schlägt ein Kreuz. 'Hab Erbarmen, o Herr, mit dieser armen Seele!' flüstern seine Lippen."

There were some, though, who confronted the reality of war in the pages of the Alpenverein's publications. Hanns Barth, one of the Alpenverein's most prolific writers in the Weimar era, began his publishing career during the war. Barth's voice is one of the few that even entertained thoughts critical of the war's conduct.

This disastrous war demands enormous amounts of energy and money. Goods and blood, materiel and humanity, all into the hecatombs! And I fear that we should doubt whether Europe will ever be able to set the tone for the leadership of the world and of humanity, if one doesn't realize that blood and iron are always the best treatment for senility.⁵⁷

Leo Handl, another critical voice, directly addressed the bloodiness of the war in his essay, "*Aufgaben und Aussichten des D.u.Ö. Alpenvereins nach dem Kriege*" ("Tasks and Prospects for the German-Austrian Alpenverein after the War"), while simultaneously venerating the fallen:

If each of us helps with this great task, remaining aware that we must steadfastly continue the work of our very best, those who bled to death upon the field of battle for truth and justice, then we will enter a great age, and 'new life will bloom among the ruins.'⁵⁸

These sober assessments, which recognized the war's immense cost in terms of human life and morality, along with resources and energy, were drowned out in the rush to position fallen mountaineers in the pantheon of German heroes.

⁵⁷ ZDÖAV (1917/18): 146. "Unsumme von Kraft und Kosten, die der unselige Krieg allein in dieser Richtung heischt. Dazu noch all die Hekatomben an Gut und Blut, an Material und Menschenwitz! Und man müßte verzweifeln vor Angst, daß jemals wieder Europa tonangebend die Welt und die Menschheit höher leiten könne, wüßte man nicht, daß Blut und Eisen noch stets der beste Regenerator gegen Senilität gewesen sind."

⁵⁸ MDÖAV (1916): 74. The quote is from Friedrich von Schiller's *Wilhelm Tell*: "The old one fell, the times are changing / And new life blooms among the ruins" ("Das Alte stürzt, es ändert sich die Zeit / Und neues Leben blüht aus den Ruinen.") "Wenn jeder von uns an diesem großen Werke mithilft im Bewußtsein, das Werk unserer Besten, die auf dem Schlachtfelde für Wahrheit und Recht verblutet sind, unentwegt fortzuführen, dann gehen wir einer großen Zeit entgegen und 'neues Leben blüht aus den Ruinen.'"

Renker's explicit connection between war and mountaineering suggests how the experience of battle informed thinking and writing about mountaineering. By aligning mountain climbing with war, Renker, along with other writers, invested mountaineering with military and nationalist qualities. The disciplined mind and body of the mountaineer, honed to perfection on alpine climbs, represented an ideal military subject and national defender. The glorification of mountaineering also made implicit claims about the superiority of the Alpine landscape over the cities and plains below; the mountains were the source of a particular type of German masculinity, and therefore deserved the protection that only mountaineers could offer it.

Adolf Deye was one of many who answered the military's call, and he was especially proud to have been selected for duty on the alpine front. In his 1917 essay, "*Kriegsbilder aus den Hochalpen*" ("Portraits of the War in the High Alps"), Deye affirmed his love for Germany's mountain *Heimat* and pledged to give his life in its defense: "before the time had come, we mountaineers had already dreamed of the highest happiness and most glorious goal of our ambitions: to be able to defend our own real homeland (*Heimat*), the mountains, with our own blood and lives."⁵⁹ While Deye recalled his dreams of the opportunity to sacrifice himself for the alpine *Heimat*, an anonymous author in the *Mitteilungen* also looks wistfully into a future when the sacrifices of mountaineers will be honored and venerated: "it is to be hoped that later, when the time comes to engage in critical retrospection and deliberation, that the inherent meaning of mountaineering will be recognized and honored by the proper military authorities."⁶⁰ In

⁵⁹ *ZDÖAV* (1917/18): 162. "... wir Bergsteiger erträumten es uns wohl schon, bevor die Zeit gekommen war, als höchstes Glück und herrlichstes Ziel unseres Strebens, unsere eigenste und eigentlichste *Heimat*, die Berge, mit dem Einsatz von Blut und Leben verteidigen zu dürfen."

⁶⁰ *MDÖAV* (1917): 103. "Es ist zu hoffen, daß später, wenn die Zeit gekommen sein wird, kritische Rückblicke und Erwägungen anzustellen, die Bedeutung, die dem Alpinismus hierbei zukommt, auch in Deutschland von den maßgebenden militärischen Stellen erkannt und gewürdigt werde."

what could be called “pre-emptive memorialization,” several authors looked forward to the promise of glory in perpetuity. One observer writing in the *Mitteilungen* imagined how the war generation would impart its wisdom to the next generation, positioning the reader as the recipient of this future history lesson: “even those who waged war in the Alps, perhaps for the first time in their lives, they will come back again to see the sites of their battles and efforts once more, and they will tell us about everything that they accomplished and suffered here.”⁶¹ Alfred Steinitzer remembered those who had fallen by imagining their corporal incorporation into the mountain itself: “but these sites were not desecrated by the deaths of the best kind of raw men of war. They had already grown together with their mountains, they were rocks themselves, upon which German culture has built its house.”⁶² Investing alpine geography with the quasi-mystical qualities of a burial site, Steinitzer imagines mountains as a sacred space, a hallowed ground. He also guarantees that the fallen soldiers of the mountain war will not have lost their lives in vain; their sacrifices constitute the very foundation of German culture. As Leo Handl had written during the war, “new life will bloom among the ruins.”

THE ALPENVEREIN IN THE POST-WAR ERA

The Alpenverein reacted to the defeat of 1918 with dismay and defiance. Losses during the war included the complete destruction of thirteen alpine huts and the looting and vandalization of the rest.⁶³ None of the Alpenverein’s pre-war construction in the

⁶¹ MDÖAV (1917): 1. “Auch jene, die der Krieg in die Alpen geführt, zum ersten Male vielleicht, sie werden wieder kommen, die Stellen ihrer Kämpfe und Mühen noch einmal zu schauen, und sie werden uns erzählen von allem, was sie hier vollbracht und erlitten haben.”

⁶² ZDÖAV (1917/18): 162. “Aber nicht entweiht wurde diese Stätte durch die Inanspruchnahme ihrer besten Eigenart von rauhen Kriegsmännern. Die sind schon lange verwachsen mit ihren Bergen, selbst Felsen, auf denen das Deutschtum sein Haus gebaut hat.”

⁶³ ZDÖAV (1919): 188.

mountains was left untouched; trails and trail markers suffered heavy damage, cable systems built for the transportation of supplies were in shambles, and even the club's tiny emergency shelters were flattened.⁶⁴

The worst of it all, though, was the loss of the Dolomites and South Tyrol to Italy. Writing after the war, the mountaineer Heinrich Menger assessed the grim postwar situation:

The fate of our country has been decided. Wherever German is spoken, voices sounded the call for the unity of Tyrol; but all in vain. German South Tyrol, with the jewel of the Alps, the Dolomites, were awarded to the traitors, along with more than 70 alpine huts that belonged to the Alpenverein, huts that for the last half-century have been the pride of their owners, showcases of German mountaineering culture, the fruit of tireless work and sacrifice.⁶⁵

The 70-plus alpine huts that were now in the hands of the "traitors" amounted to approximately 22% of all of the Alpenverein's properties, which, along with the destruction caused by the war, constituted a significant blow to the club's holdings.⁶⁶

Though painful, the club's property losses paled in comparison to the magnitude of the imagined cultural loss. Menger described South Tyrol in terms of a geography loaded with historical and cultural significance, as well as a lost branch of the German nation:

The future lies before us, darker than ever before; no glowing dawn of freedom for our alpine countries and their pearl, Tyrol. Enslaved under a foreign yoke, we now see the fruits of an entire generation's arduous cultural labor in the hands of a

⁶⁴ ZDÖAV (1919): 184.

⁶⁵ ZDÖAV (1919): 183. "Das Schicksal unseres Landes ist nunmehr entschieden. Die Stimmen, die überall, soweit deutsche Zunge klingt, für die Einheit Tirols erschallten, waren in den Wind gesprochen, Deutsch-Südtirol mit dem Juwel der Alpen, den Dolomiten, wurde dem Verräter zuerkannt: Damit sind mehr als 70 Hütten für unseren Verein verloren, jene Hütten, die, der Stolz ihrer Besitzer, Schmuckkästchen deutschen Bergsteigertums vergleichbar, die Frucht rastloser opferreicher Arbeit eines halben Jahrhunderts gewesen sind."

⁶⁶ ZDÖAV (1919): 199-204. In an appendix to this edition of the Zeitschrift, the Alpenverein counted 323 huts, including those that had been lost with South Tyrol.

people whose essence is as foreign to us as our mountains are to them. Our mountains? Can we still call them ‘ours’? ... Today there are whole regions and places that are intimately associated with the beginnings of alpinism and with the history of the Alpenverein, localities that were the highest goal of thousands of our best men – all in the possession of our opponents. The struggle over the southern border of our alpine countries has been decided in their favor, the last word for the time being, separating us from our Germanic brothers and Alpenverein comrades in the south!⁶⁷

Investing the South Tyrolean landscape with a specifically German historical and cultural significance, Menger claims that Italians are incapable of comprehending the meaning of mountains. The assignment of specific national qualities to the Alps, and especially to South Tyrol, became a topic treated consistently in the Alpenverein’s *Mitteilungen* and *Zeitschriften* throughout the Weimar period.⁶⁸ What Germany had lost in war, it seemed, the Alpenverein would rhetorically reclaim.

Alpenverein authors also spent a great deal of time discussing the club’s role in the war. As we have already seen, Alpenverein members who were combatants on the southern front, such as Gustav Renker, recognized the usefulness of the mountaineer’s expertise in the waging of mountain warfare. After the war, the Alpenverein looked back and assessed their contributions to the war effort. As Menger notes, before the war, the military had had little interest in the “ethical and practical cultural labor” of the

⁶⁷ *ZDÖAV* (1919): 168. “Dunkler als je liegt die Zukunft vor uns, kein leuchtendes Morgenrot der Freiheit zieht für unsere Alpenländer und dessen Perle, Tirol, herauf. Geknechtet unter fremdes Joch, sehen wir die Früchte emsigster Kulturarbeit eines Menschenalters einem Volke zufallen, das uns so wesensfremd ist wie unseren Bergen. Unsere Berge? Dürfen wir sie noch unser nennen? ... Heute sind weite Gebiete desselben, Stätten, die mit den Anfängen des Alpinismus und mit der Vereinsgeschichte auf innigste verknüpft sind, Örtlichkeiten, die das höchste Ziel vieler Tausender unserer Besten waren, im Besitz der Gegner. Zu deren Gunsten ist der Streit um die Südgrenze unserer Alpenländer entschieden, das letzte Wort vorläufig gefallen, das uns von unseren Stammesbrüdern und Vereinsgenossen im Süden trennt!”

⁶⁸ Professor Otto Stolz of Innsbruck addressed a series of Italian academic publications that laid claim to the German-speaking areas of South Tyrol on the basis that the areas in question were originally populated by Italians. Stolz goes on to decry “the oppression of the *German language* in schools and offices, in the education of children and all of public life.” *MDÖAV* (1931): 133.

Alpenverein.⁶⁹ In 1907, however, the Ministry of Defense entered into an agreement with the Alpenverein that allowed the military to take over administration of the alpine huts in the event of war.⁷⁰ During the war, the military also benefited from the Alpenverein's extensive trail system, its cable transport systems and other infrastructure that had been built to support the tourism encouraged by the Alpenverein's leadership: "In addition to the idealistic support of the defense of the fatherland, *our club's alpine construction work* made an obvious contribution and was fully used in the mountain war."⁷¹ The emphasis placed on "*our club's alpine construction work*" indicates the pride that the Alpenverein took in their network of trails and huts, and their even greater pride that they were able to contribute to the military effort. Instead of publishing photographs of fallen Alpenverein members in the 1919 *Zeitschrift*, there are a series of photographs of the various huts demolished during the war, with the dates of their construction and the dates of their destruction.

The Alpenverein's human losses, however, were obscured by representational strategies that avoided confrontation with the reality of death. First, the Alpenverein cast the war as a conflict between competing worldviews and notions of soul, rather than the collision of bodies and metal on the battlefield. By viewing the mountain war as a proving ground for Alpenverein ideals, the club interpreted the war as an occasion for the realization of the true value of mountaineering, namely

⁶⁹ *ZDÖAV* (1919): 171. "Vor dem Krieg verhielten sich die militärischen Kreise gegenüber dem Alpinismus und seinen Schöpfungen sowie gegenüber der Kulturarbeit unseres Vereins auf ethischem und praktischem Gebiet ziemlich passiv."

⁷⁰ *ZDÖAV* (1919): 171. "Im Jahr 1907 trat zwischen dem Ministerium für Landesverteidigung und dem Hauptausschuß eine Vereinbarung in Kraft, welche die Benützung der Schutzhäuser des Alpenvereins durch das Militär regelte."

⁷¹ *ZDÖAV* (1919): 183. "Gegenüber dieser ideellen Unterstützung der Vaterlandsverteidigung tritt ganz augenfällig jene hervor, die in der *alpinen Bautätigkeit unseres Vereins* fußt und im Gebirgskrieg voll zur Geltung kam." Emphasis in original.

that through the Alpenverein's decades-long promotion of mountaineering, generations of members became part of a movement that appears to be better-suited than any other to improve and maintain the military fitness and power of the German *Volk*.⁷²

The war had proven beyond a doubt what "members of the movement formerly had to defend against the shortsighted judgment of the masses," mountaineering's utility as an introduction to masculinity and patriotism:

[Mountaineering] combines the complete training of the organism, including increases in physical dexterity, resistance to disease and endurance, with the possibility to prove one's courage, determination and presence of mind, thereby fully developing a sense for camaraderie and responsibility, and awakening and binding the love of nature with the love of the homeland (*Heimat*).⁷³

According to the Alpenverein, one of the war's implicit lessons was that more of Germany's soldiers should have become mountaineers.

The Alpenverein was less interested in concentrating upon the devastations of the war than it was in preparing for the next one. The Alpenverein imagined the mountaineer as a representative of the German nation, bowed by defeat yet not broken:

Heavy dark clouds cover Germany's skies and have blotted out the sun of victory. An oppressive atmosphere weighs heavily upon the beloved fatherland... It is good to be a mountaineer, to summon all of the strengths of the mountaineer's nature from the depths of the soul and the unconquerable drive for the heights that resides there. The mountaineer holds his head high, come what may. Rain and storm and snow and ice, they cannot stop him in his upward drive; he only bows before one thing: death, the conqueror of all.⁷⁴

⁷² ZDÖAV (1919): 175. "Hierin liegt aber auch nicht das Bedeutungsvolle, sondern vielmehr in der Tatsache, daß durch die jahrzehntelange Förderung des Alpinismus seitens des Alpenvereins Generationen Anhänger einer Bewegung wurden, die wie keine andere dazu berufen erscheint, die Wehrfähigkeit und Wehrkraft des Volkes zu heben und zu erhalten."

⁷³ ZDÖAV (1919): 175-176. "Verbindet es doch mit der allseitigen Durchbildung des Organismus, mit der Zunahme der körperlichen Gewandtheit, der Widerstandskraft und Ausdauer die Möglichkeit, Mut, Entschlossenheit und Geistesgegenwart zu beweisen, es bildet das Kameradschafts- und damit das Verantwortlichkeitsgefühl aus und weckt und festigt mit der Liebe zur Natur die Liebe zur *Heimat*."

⁷⁴ MDÖAV (1919): 3. "Schwere, dunkle Wolken sind heraufgezogen über Deutschlands Himmel und haben ihm die Sonne des Sieges verdunkelt. Eine drückend schwüle Atmosphäre lastet über dem geliebten Vaterland... Da gilt es, Bergsteiger zu sein und alle Kräfte der Bergsteigernatur heraufzuholen aus der Tiefe der Seele und mit ihnen jenen unüberwindlichen Drang zur Höhe, der dieser Seele innewohnt. Steif hält

The metaphor of ascent applied equally to nation and to mountaineer:

And when everyday cares and complaints threaten to push us to floor, then we must remind ourselves that we are mountaineers, and stand up tall, as is the custom and character of the mountaineer, and together, true to our loyal, staunch camaraderie, strive again for the heights.⁷⁵

The Alpenverein's metaphorical ascent, however, was not limited only to mountaineers; indeed, as Menger writes, it was incumbent upon the Alpenverein to realize its historical mission for the German nation:

The Alpenverein will have to adjust to this new age and break with some elements of the past. The Alpenverein was the most powerful representative of German mountaineering before the war, and also a link between the Germanic peoples of two empires. Now, the Alpenverein must become conscious of its role as a spearhead of German culture and continue its beneficial work on the foundation of the nation.⁷⁶

In the wake of Germany's defeat, the Alpenverein oriented itself towards military preparedness and positioned mountaineering as an activity necessary for future victory.

THE MILITARIZATION AND RADICALIZATION OF THE ALPENVEREIN

World War I was a watershed moment for the Alpenverein. Formerly an organization dedicated to the study, appreciation and enjoyment of the Alps, the Alpenverein began after 1918 to re-imagine its prewar past as a period of unconscious preparation for the rigors of war. The club's culture underwent a thorough militarization during WW I as the Alpenverein sought to position itself as indispensable to the war

den Nacken der Bergsteiger, es komme, was da wolle. Regen und Sturm und Schnee und Eis, sie können ihn nicht aufhalten in seinem Drang nach oben, und nur vor *einem* beugt er sich, dem Allbezwinger Tod."

⁷⁵ MDÖAV (1919): 3. "Und wenn des Alltags Sorge und Beschwerde uns zu Boden zu drücken drohen, dann wollen wir uns daran erinnern, daß wir Bergsteiger sind, und uns aufrichten an bergsteigerischer Sitte und Art und gemeinsam, treue, feste Kameradschaft haltend, wieder zur Höhe streben."

⁷⁶ ZDÖAV (1919): 194. "Auch der Alpenverein wird sich der neuen Zeit anpassen und mit manchem aus der Vergangenheit brechen müssen. Vor dem Krieg als mächtigster Vertreter des deutschen Bergsteigertums ein Bindeglied zwischen den deutschen Stämmen zweier Reiche, muß sich der Alpenverein seiner Stellung als Vorkämpfer des Deutschtums bewußt werden und seine segensreiche Tätigkeit auf nationaler Grundlage fortsetzen."

effort. The mountaineer's attributes, such as steadfastness, physical strength, skill and mental fortitude, were all placed in the new context of militarism and weighed for their utility on the field of battle. The rigors of alpine ascents were treated as symbolic of national reconstruction and Germany's predicted rise to greatness. And since the Treaty of Versailles did not permit Germany to have a standing army, the Alpenverein stepped into the gap and assumed the role of preparing its members for the defense of the fatherland.

The Alpenverein was not the only organization that re-oriented itself toward military preparedness. Associational life in Germany already had a long history of nationalist, *völkisch* thought going back to the latter third of the eighteenth century. Gymnastic, choir and sharpshooting societies held large festivals throughout the nineteenth century that integrated elements of what George Mosse has termed Germany's "secular religion," a complex web of national monuments and symbolic rites that invented national traditions leading up to German unification in 1871.⁷⁷

After Germany's defeat in 1918, the sharpshooting societies (*Schützenvereine*) began to emphasize the importance of training Germans how to handle, maintain and shoot firearms. The *Schützenvereine*, like the Alpenverein, experienced dramatic growth after World War I⁷⁸; perhaps this was because the Treaty of Versailles's prohibition on military weaponry granted the *Schützenvereine* "a monopoly on shooting and helped to foster sharpshooting's paramilitary character."⁷⁹ The military connotations of sharpshooting did not escape the attention of paramilitary forces in the Weimar Republic,

⁷⁷ George L. Mosse, *The Nationalization of the Masses. Political Symbolism & Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich* (New York: Howard Fertig, 2001): 127.

⁷⁸ David Imhoof, "Sharpshooting in Göttingen: A Case Study of Cultural Integration in Weimar and Nazi Germany," *German History* 23.4 (2005): 461.

⁷⁹ Imhoof 464.

including right-wing conservative organizations such as the Stahlhelm, the Young German Order and the SA, as well as left-wing organizations such as the Reich Banner Red-Black-Gold and the Red Front Fighting League.⁸⁰ Apparently, both sides realized the utility of paramilitary sports, including sharpshooting, in attacks upon and defense of the Republic.

Politicians also recognized the latent political power of Germany's associational culture. During a 1921 sharpshooting festival in Göttingen, the local paper became the forum for discussions of sharpshooting's significance in the larger context of national politics. Reichstag representative Heinrich Lind of the DNVP (German National People's Party) answered his own rhetorical question, "Should we celebrate festivals at this time?" as follows:

[o]ur German Volk has suffered so much financially and emotionally under bondage to France that this really is not the atmosphere for heady celebrations. Now is the time, however, for *Heimat* celebrations associated with memorial commemorations. Indeed, it is a psychological necessity to commemorate and truly venerate those heroes from all levels of our nation who lie now in foreign soil. It is also a psychological necessity to bow before God Almighty in open nature surrounding by waving fields and gather strength for the great battle under the slogan 'Rebuild our Fatherland and Free our Volk.'⁸¹

Lind's emphasis upon remembering the fallen while gathering "strength for the great battle" echoes the rhetoric of rearmament published by the Alpenverein. Where Steinitzer imagines mountaineer soldiers melding with alpine boulders, Lind refers to soldiers in foreign soil; where Menger describes the yoke of foreign tyranny, Lind gives voice to the yearning for emancipation.

Just as the *Schützenvereine* assumed the role of national defenders, the Alpenverein began to proclaim its role in the reconstruction of the German nation,

⁸⁰ Imhoof 464-465.

⁸¹ Göttinger Tageblatt, 21 July 1921, qtd. in Imhoof 468.

thereby shifting its self-representation from a society of alpine enthusiasts to a community of nationalists. In their first postwar assembly, the Alpenverein declared that

Alpinism is one of the most important means for restoring the moral strength of the German Volk, especially in the form of mountaineering work, which is particularly applicable and worthwhile when it comes to awakening and strengthening the potential spiritual power of the will, thereby encouraging the development of true German masculine virtues.⁸²

The idea that mountaineering could be one of the most important activities for the construction of a new German masculinity illustrates the Alpenverein's self-imposed postwar mission. According to the Alpenverein, mountaineers were the heralds of a new generation that would not fail on the field of battle again. The Alpenverein suggested that the primary characteristics of the alpinist – physical strength combined with the mental capacity necessary to endure the trials of reaching a mountain summit – were precisely the attributes that a new Germany would have to cultivate.

Such sentiments were not limited to Germany. Austrian mountaineers and organizations also looked to mountaineering as a source of inspiration for the future. The Austrian mountaineer Fritz Rigele wrote in 1920 that

Although I had realized before the War that sports clubs were an extraordinarily important and rewarding source of popular (*volkstümlich*) authenticity, I found myself, after the unhappy end of the War, more and more involved in the leadership of ski clubs and Alpenverein sections. I did this because I sensed that it was in these organizations and in their activities that I would find a replacement for the compulsory military service that the peace treaties had made impossible. ... All different sorts of clubs, especially the mountaineering and sports clubs, seemed, from a practical perspective, to be valuable breeding grounds (*Keimzelle*) for the ideas of national regeneration... In a whole range of Austrian

⁸² MDÖAV (1919): 130. "Eines der wichtigsten Mittel, um die sittliche Kraft des deutschen Volkes wiederherzustellen ist der Alpinismus, und zwar in Form der bergsteigerischen Arbeit. Denn diese ist geeignet, überaus wertvolle, hauptsächlich auf dem Gebiete des Willens liegende geistige Kräfte zu wecken und zu stärken und damit die Entwicklung echter deutscher Männestugenden zu fördern."

mountaineering, sports and gymnastic clubs, there was a heightened awareness of the necessity of protecting our national interests.⁸³

In the context of the postwar prohibitions placed upon Germany and Austria's military forces, Rigele's vision of alpinism as an activity fit to replace universal compulsory military service indicates the extent to which the War had radicalized the Alpenverein. However, Rigele also positions mountaineers and their organizations as the ideal breeding grounds for a new Austrian nation, implicitly associating alpinism with an elite culture that could train the next generation for a successful war.

Rigele's personal ruminations were also echoed in the collective voice of the Innsbruck section of the Alpenverein, which articulated their vision of the Alpenverein as a source of national regeneration. Mountaineering, with its "deep effects on spirit, will and body," could engage the "widest possible circles of the German Volk." And in a reference to the early nineteenth-century gymnastics teacher and nationalist, Friedrich "Turnvater" Ludwig Jahn, the Innsbruck section presented mountaineers as the fathers of a generation that would cast off the yoke of foreign domination: "For us, mountaineering means popular (*völkisch*) strengthening and building, in the sense of F. L. Jahn."⁸⁴ Just as the generation trained by Turnvater Jahn had evicted Napoleon's occupying forces from Germany, the coming generation would reverse the humiliations imposed by the victors

⁸³ Fritz Rigele, *50 Jahre Bergsteiger. Erlebnisse und Gedanken* (Berlin-Wilmersdorf, Sport und Spiel Verlag, 1935) 325-327. "Hatte ich schon in der Vorkriegszeit die Sportverbände für eine außerordentlich wichtige und dankbare Quelle volkstümlicher Bestätigung betrachtet, so fand ich mich nach dem unglücklichen Kriegsende um so mehr zur Beteiligung an der Führung von Skiverbänden und Alpenvereins-Sektionen veranlaßt; schon deshalb, weil ich gerade in diesen Körperschaften und ihrer Betätigung einen bescheidenen Ersatz für die durch die Friedensverträge unmöglich gemachte allgemeine Wehrpflicht erblickte. ... Verbände verschiedener Art, in unserem Falle vor allem Bergsteiger- und Sportverbände, schienen hier vom praktischen Gesichtspunkt aus betrachtet, eine wertvolle Keimzelle für die Ideen des nationalen Wiederaufstieges zu sein. ... In einer ganzen Anzahl österreichischer Bergsteiger-, Sport- und Turnverbände erwachte die Notwendigkeit der Wahrung nationaler Interessen in erhöhtem Maße."

⁸⁴ Festschrift zur Hauptsammlung des DuÖAV, 1925. 217-218. "Die Bergsteigerei bedeutet uns im Sinne F.L. Jahns völkische Ertüchtigung und Aufrichtung."

of World War I and build a new, independent Germany. A delegate from the Innsbruck Section elucidated the Alpenverein's national mission at the club's 1923 convention:

We ... were not the last to see that the highest value of mountaineering and alpinism was not pleasure or the noble joys of the high mountains, but rather the training of the will. This education of the will should not only serve the individual, but also the physical and moral strengthening of the entire German culture, in the sense of Friedrich Ludwig Jahn.⁸⁵

Gustav Müller, a high official in the Alpenverein during the 1920s, also described the role that mountaineering was to play in the reconstruction of the German nation.⁸⁶ Pointing to the “overintelligent, soulless” character of modern men, who are “only concerned with material prosperity,”⁸⁷ Müller portrays mountaineers as men of deep feeling who “want to become soulful, real men.”⁸⁸ The path to becoming a full person, Müller contends, leads to the mountains, where “freedom from the chains of egoism and materialism” is possible.⁸⁹ It is only in the mountains, where “struggle (*Kampf*) is ubiquitous,” where “*Kampf*” is reified in the mountain landscape, that the “man softened by civilization” can reclaim his natural strength. Imagining the struggle that alpine plants undergo to survive in the harsh climate of the heights, describing how the “phalanxes of mountain pines, steeled in battle, push up doggedly, resurfacing repeatedly out of talus and avalanches,” Müller speculates that, “if our Volk had only a little bit of the alpine

⁸⁵ MDÖAV (1923): 108. “Wir in der Sektion Innsbruck waren nicht die letzten, die den höchsten Wert der Bergsteigerei und des Alpinismus nicht im Genuß, auch nicht in der edelsten Freude des Hochgebirges gesehen haben, sondern in der eigenen Willenserziehung und diese Willenserziehung sollte nach unserer längst feststehenden Auffassung nicht dem einzelnen dienen, sondern im Sinne Friedrich Ludwig Jahn's zur körperlichen und sittlichen Ertüchtigung des ganzen deutschen Volkstums.”

⁸⁶ Gustav Müller, “Die Berge und ihre Bedeutung für den Wiederaufbau des deutschen Volkes” ZDÖAV 53 (1922): 1-9.

⁸⁷ Müller 2.

⁸⁸ Müller 3.

⁸⁹ Müller 6.

plant world's tenacity, and its patience and power for struggle, things would stand otherwise and nothing could have humbled our Volk."⁹⁰ The mountains provide the "power for *Kampf* and victory [and ...] the power to overcome all obstacles" as well as an opportunity to revitalize "a sick Volk."⁹¹ The essay ends with Müller's proclamation that the values acquired by mountaineers in their struggle with the alpine world can help reconstitute and strengthen the German nation:

Only then, when Germany's Volk and above all Germany's youth acknowledge that struggle is the pitiless law of the world, and that the price of fulfilling one's duty in battle, adversity and danger demands awareness of what must be done ... only then will we Germans be able to call ourselves a great Volk, only then will we be invincible ... From these treasures of the mountains, Germanic nations (*Alldeutschland*), take the will, courage and strength to fight for your very existence, there, young Germany, steel your arms, senses and wills, nourish your souls and forge your weaponry!⁹²

Müller presents mountaineering not as a pleasurable pastime, but as a military academy for a new generation of invincible soldiers. Inflamed by "the fire of love for the *Heimat*" found in the mountains, a new Germany would steel itself for combat anew – and this time it would not suffer defeat.

Two years later, Müller articulated his vision for the club's role in the cultivation of a new German elite corps of warriors:

No other organization is as well-suited as the Alpenverein to fulfill such a task: the promotion of the moral health of the Volk (*Volksgesundheit*), to recruit and bring together virtuous men and to orient them toward the high goal of liberating our fatherland, to increase their virtue, to fan the flames of their zeal and to direct

⁹⁰ Müller 7.

⁹¹ Müller 8.

⁹² Müller 9. "Nur dann, wenn Deutschlands Volk und vor allem Deutschlands Jugend den Kampf als ehernes Weltgesetz anerkennt und für die Erfüllung seiner Pflicht in Kampf, Not und Gefahr keinen anderen Lohn verlangt als das Bewußtsein, dem, was es soll, gemäß gehandelt zu haben, nur dann werden wir Deutschen uns wieder ein großes Volk nennen dürfen und unbesiegbar sein. [...] Aus diesen Schätzen [der Berge], Alldeutschland, hole dir Willen, Mut und Kraft zum Kampf um dein Sein, dort, Jungdeutschland, stähle Arme, Sinne und Willen, nähre deine Seele und schmiede deine Wehr!"

that enthusiasm, to fill them with the spirit that Germany needs to rise up out of disgrace and shame, and to provide a core group of virtuous men who can fight, are ready to fight, and are ready to sacrifice themselves.⁹³

The militarist rhetoric of this statement – and many others like it – illustrates the new values that now occupied center stage in the post-war Alpenverein. It is difficult to even detect what is particularly “alpine” about this passage, aside from the double meaning of “*Aufstieg*” (“ascent”); instead, the text reads like an advertisement for military recruitment.

It is no longer sufficient to recognize that the Alpenverein is qualified to recruit a brave German troop (*Männerschaft*) that is perfectly healthy, in terms of body and soul, mind and will; rather, our organization must actually focus on these goals and begin moving in that direction. Conscious of this goal, with a firm will, the Alpenverein must place itself in the service of the German fatherland.⁹⁴

The experience of World War I profoundly altered the Alpenverein’s mission. Whereas the club had earlier sought to enable the enjoyment of the mountains by the largest possible number of people, they now scorned any element of mountaineering that did not have to do with the hardening of the body and mind in preparation for combat:

Throughout the ages, real mountaineers have maintained this community of fate – there is no room for sentimentality, no romantic moonlight hours, because they sometimes perform hard, bloody work in the mountains. If we uphold this old mountaineering spirit, then we will come closer and closer to the image of the man that we have dreamed of in waking life.⁹⁵

⁹³ MDÖAV (1924): 211. “Kaum eine Organisation ist so wie der Alpenverein geeignet, eine solche Aufgabe zu erfüllen, ethische Volksgesundheit zu fördern, Tüchtige zu sammeln, heranzuziehen und dem hohen Ziele, der Befreiung ihres Vaterlandes entgegenzuführen, ihre Tüchtigkeit zu steigern, ihre Begeisterung zu entflammen und zu zügeln, sie mit dem Geist zu erfüllen, den Deutschlands Aufstieg aus Schande und Niedertracht nötig hat, und dem Vaterlande eine Kerntruppe tüchtiger, aufopferungswilliger, kampfbereiter und kampffähiger Männer bereitzustellen.”

⁹⁴ MDÖAV (1924) 211. “Aber heute genügt nicht die Erkenntnis, daß der Alpenverein zur Heranziehung einer wackeren, an Leib und Seele, Gemüt und Willen kerngesunden deutschen Männerschaft geeignet sei, sondern heute muß sich der Verein auf diese Ziele auch tatsächlich einstellen, in dieser Zielrichtung handeln und zielbewußt und mit festem Willen, soviel an ihm liegt, in den Dienst des deutschen Vaterlandes stellen.”

⁹⁵ Deutscher und Österreichischer Alpenverein, *Alpines Handbuch*, 2 vols., vol. 2 (Leipzig, 1931) 13. “Zu allen Zeiten haben echte Bergsteiger diese Schicksalsgemeinschaft hochgehalten – sie ist keine

This new emphasis on the visceral struggle of mountaineering – as opposed to sentimental romantic introspection – stood in stark contrast to the Alpenverein’s former identity as a facilitator of alpine appreciation. Clearly, the experience of World War I and its aftermath had radicalized the Alpenverein, shaping it into an organization dedicated to the cultivation of a national culture that would never accept defeat again.

Gefühlsseligkeit, keine Romantik für Mondscheinstunden, denn harte blutige Arbeit schafft sie manchmal in den Bergen. Wenn wir diesen alten Bergsteigergeist hochhalten, dann kommen wir auch dem Bilde des Menschen, wie wir ihn erträumen im übrigen Leben, immer näher und näher.”

Chapter 2: Tourism and the Negotiation of Alpine Space

The experience of World War I radicalized the Alpenverein in several distinct ways. The Alps, no longer a shared cultural treasure to be enjoyed by all, were described as a training ground for masculinity and soldiers, a preparatory school for war. The aesthetic enjoyment of the alpine landscape was relegated to the margins as the Alpenverein focused on the utility of the harsh mountain climate for hardening the body and steeling the mind. The loss of South Tyrol in the Treaty of St. Germain charged the Alps with political and national significance, as the Alpenverein lamented the loss of the Dolomites and the subjugation of the German-speaking Tyrolean population. Shortly after WW I, the Alpenverein shifted its focus from promoting travel in the Alps to preserving the Alps as the exclusive geographic province of the mountaineer's ideal prototype: an über-masculine, physically powerful, strong-willed and courageous warrior for the German nation.

The explosion of the tourism industry and the arrival of mass tourism in the Alps, however, contradicted and complicated the narrative preferred by the Alpenverein. As roads, railroads, hotels, spas and resorts were built throughout the Alps, the Alpenverein perceived these developments as encroachments upon their ideal space. Positioning themselves as the only true stewards of the alpine landscape, the Alpenverein intervened in local debates about railway construction and tourism development, arguing that the Alps were in need of protection, not profits. And much to their dismay, the Alpenverein was unable to hold their ground against the wave of mass tourism in the Alps.

This chapter examines how the experience of mass tourism transformed the Alpenverein during the years of the Weimar Republic (1919-1933). The Alpenverein, along with a host of other German-speaking alpine clubs and publications that sprang up

during the 1920s, began to renegotiate the meaning of alpine space. Were the Alps still a geography of illumination, epiphany and sublime beauty? The site of curative and restorative healing powers? Or were mountains a space endangered by mass tourism and the tourist industry, a vanishing utopia in need of protection?

This chapter charts the emergence of an alpine imaginary suffused with nostalgia for a lost paradise and the longing for its reclamation. In this particular case, the Alpenverein, along with a flourishing set of alpine organizations in the 1920s, engaged in a great deal of fantasizing about how the Alps could be protected from the ravages of technology and progress. The Alpenverein protested vigorously against what they perceived to be the destruction of alpine space through the construction of railways, roads, and luxury hotels and resorts. They also objected to some of the people who answered the call of alpine tourism, claiming that tourists lacked the proper attitude, let alone the skills, to earn the privilege of the alpine experience. As we shall see, alpine organizations, foremost among them the Alpenverein, engaged in a long-running battle over the meaning of the Alps and the significance of mountaineering, a war of words that would not be resolved until the Nazis imposed a solution in 1933.

BUILDING THE ALPS: PROGRESS AND DESTRUCTION

In 1925, the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* published a cartoon entitled, “A Picture of our Alps in the Future.”⁹⁶ The illustration depicts an alpine valley overrun by technology. In the distance, a large hotel looms over an alpine lake. The lake itself is dammed up, with a large industrial building on its shores. As the water rushes through a sluice at the bottom of the dam, it courses beneath a railroad bridge, alongside a large industrial pipe. Up on the flank of the mountains surrounding the valley, smoke puffs

⁹⁶ “Zukunftsbild aus unseren Alpen, oder ‘Wenn die Bergbahn Mode wird,’” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 22 May 1925: 3.

from an automobile's exhaust pipes as it chugs up an alpine road. Cable cars provide seamless transportation from a train station up to an alpine hut. High above, two single-propeller airplanes buzz through the sky.

This cartoonist's vision suggests the consequences of technology unleashed in the Alps. The formerly idyllic landscape, home to tradition-bound villages, destination for urban nature-lovers and adventure-seekers, has fallen victim to unbridled and unmanaged growth. The illustration's caption – "if the mountain railways become fashionable" – indicates the threat that modern technology poses for the Alps. Once the train arrives, so do the tourist hordes, with their demands for modern conveniences like electricity, plumbing, and quick, efficient transportation. The Alps, in an ironic twist, would become an industrialized landscape.

Although it is a satiric exaggeration, this particular illustration summarizes many of the debates over mountains and their significance that began in the late nineteenth century and have raged unabated since. How much modernization can the Alps take? What is lost or gained by the introduction of modern amenities? How deep and how high into the mountains should the railway go? How many roads, hotels, huts, hiking paths and cable cars should be built? And at what point does modernization result in the destruction of the landscape it is meant to showcase?

In the German-speaking alpine press, debates about construction in the Alps revealed a deep concern that formerly pristine mountain landscapes were being loved to death. Discussions about the future of the Alps juxtaposed a pastoral alpine geography, long familiar to admirers of the works of Romantic painters such as Caspar David Friedrich, with the ominous threat of over-modernization. These two landscapes – the depopulated alpine ideal and the overpopulated tourist nightmare – also pointed to the inverse relationship between tourism and natural preservation. If alpine tourism could be

limited, then the view would remain as it was in Friedrich's *Solitary Wanderer above a Sea of Fog*, the domain of a select few privileged enough to enjoy nature's sublime mysteries. If untrammelled tourism and development were allowed to continue, however, the Alps would become a landscape oversaturated in technology, overrun by visitors, and the mountains' former majesty would become a distant memory.

In the alpine press, two debates in particular demonstrated the contradictory demands that mountaineering and tourism placed on the natural environment. The first of these debates focused on the construction of railways in the Alps, especially the construction of cog railroads that led to the top of popular mountains such as the Zugspitze in Bavaria and the Rax near Vienna. Although mountaineering clubs and alpine organizations had long sought to facilitate access to the Alps for their members, the explosive growth of these clubs in the 1920s corresponded with an upsurge in the number of railways that transported tourists into the Alps, in some cases even directly to alpine summits. Alarmed by the ease of travel afforded by railroads, and the sudden increase of tourists who rode in comfort to destinations previously accessible only through difficult, multi-day hikes, mountaineers began to question the wisdom of opening the Alps to anyone with a train ticket and leisure time. Consequently, mountaineering clubs began to agitate and lobby against new construction projects, especially the Zugspitzbahn and the Raxbahn, but in almost every case their efforts to halt the spread of alpine railways were unsuccessful.

The second of these debates dealt with the construction and administration of the alpine huts. Originally built to offer primitive shelter to mountaineers on long tours, by the 1920s the huts had become increasingly commercialized operations that offered food, drink and lodging to tourists. As tourism increased, so did the number of huts. Alpine organizations continued to build additional huts with amenities such as electricity, radios,

telephones and other comforts afforded by modern technology. The larger huts could accommodate several overnight visitors and could provide meals and refreshments, both alcoholic and non-alcoholic, to many more day visitors. The sudden increase in alpine traffic led mountaineering organizations to question whether the huts were facilitating the reverent enjoyment of the alpine environment, or whether they were fostering a culture of tourism that viewed the Alps as a disposable consumer good. As we shall see, debates about alpine trains and huts became forums for the differentiation between the authentic mountaineer and his negative mirror-image, the tourist.

ALPENTOURISMUS

In the nineteenth century, traveling to the Alps was a time-consuming, expensive and dangerous affair. Travel over land and water presented several difficulties to the early alpine visitor, and

... until the introduction of lake steamers in the 1820s the journey across Switzerland was best made with rented horses and conveyances. Whoever could not afford such an expense was probably better off walking. This basic mode of locomotion was not, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, regarded as eccentric. The first practical guide to Switzerland by J.J. Ebel recommended walking as by far the most advantageous way of seeing the country.⁹⁷

The pastoral journey to the mountains was rapidly disappearing by the end of the nineteenth century as the tourism industry in the Alps exploded. As more and more tourists flocked to the Alps, the alpine experience underwent profound changes.

Before 1914, alpine tourism had not yet reached mass proportions, but it already had a strong history of growth.⁹⁸ The tourism industry's expansion was due primarily to

⁹⁷ Paul Bernard, Rush to the Alps. The Evolution of Vacationing in Switzerland (New York: Columbia UP, 1978) 81-82.

⁹⁸ The historian Paul Tschurtschenthaler has stated that, before 1914, one cannot speak of a "Massenerscheinung" in Tyrol. Paul Tschurtschenthaler, "Der Tourismus im Bundesland Tirol 1918-1990," Handbuch zur neueren Geschichte Tirols, eds. Anton Pelinka and Andreas Maislinger, vol. 2 (Innsbruck: Universitätsverlag Wagner, 1993) 118.

the arrival of the railroad in the nineteenth century, which heralded a new age for the Alps, both in terms of tourist possibilities and enormous change. The first major railway in the Alps, the Semmering-Bahn, was built for strategic military reasons in 1854 and ran from Vienna to Trieste. In 1867, the Brennerbahn, the first passenger train through the Alps, was put into service, connecting Innsbruck and Verona.⁹⁹ The Brennerbahn was the first of many railways built by the 1870s, and by the turn of the century, thanks to rail travel, “it had become fashionable to visit thermal spas at St. Moritz in Switzerland, St. Gervais in France, and Bad Gastein and Bad Ischl in Austria.”¹⁰⁰ The steadily increasing influx of tourism was accompanied by the feverish construction of railroads:

... the narrow-gauge, cable and cog railways that led to summit vantage points were built in a true railroad euphoria... Only the sudden outbreak of the First World War stopped even more ambitious projects, such as a railway to the summits of the Jungfrau and the Matterhorn or the cog railway connection between Brig and the Jungfrauoch along the Aletsch glacier.¹⁰¹

And one should not underestimate the engineering difficulties associated with such construction projects around the turn of the century; in fact, the heights reached by these nineteenth-century railways were not exceeded until the 1970s.

The arrival of the railroad profoundly altered the alpine landscape and the composition of pre-existing communities. Towns and villages that had formerly enjoyed some local or regional significance were simply forgotten as trade and business gravitated toward the railroad station. The development of tourist facilities and their accompanying

⁹⁹ Werner Bätzing, Die Alpen. Geschichte und Zukunft einer europäischen Kulturlandschaft (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2005) 122.

¹⁰⁰ Mary L. Barker, “Traditional Landscape and Mass Tourism in the Alps,” Geographical Review 72.4 (1982): 396.

¹⁰¹ Bätzing 143. “...die Schmalspur-, Standseil- und Zahnradbahnen, die auf Aussichtsgipfel führen und in einer wahren Bahn-Euphorie errichtet werden... Nur der plötzliche Ausbruch des Ersten Weltkrieges verhindert noch ehrgeizigere Projekte wie die Erschließung der Gipfel von Jungfrau und Matterhorn oder die Zahnrad-Eisenbahn-Verbindung zwischen Brig und Jungfrauoch entlang des Aletschgletschers.”

infrastructure was concentrated along the railroad corridors, shifting the centers of economic activity closer to the railroad tracks.¹⁰² There were significant demographic shifts among the indigenous alpine population; in France and Italy, for example, rural population figures in alpine regions declined by 50 percent between the mid-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries.¹⁰³ And along with the railroads came the enormous hotels, “leading symbols of the newly-erected infrastructure ... the gigantic “Palace Hotels” or “Grand Hotels” with 200-300 rooms, the largest secular buildings in the Alps at the time.”¹⁰⁴ These hotels

were oriented towards an aristocratic lifestyle, including dancing balls, theater, opera and concert performances, which they celebrated in the middle of the high mountains, in immediate contact with nature – it was precisely the juxtaposition of urban culture and “wild” nature that gave it all such an allure.¹⁰⁵

To provide electricity to the hotels, major streams and rivers within the Alps became the sites of hydroelectric power plants; indeed, the first Swiss hydroelectric plant began operations in 1878 to provide lighting for a hotel-restaurant in St. Moritz.¹⁰⁶

The railroad, the grand hotel and the amenities of the modern city all arrived at breathtaking speed, forever changing the visual and physical experience of alpine tourism. The technological marvel of the railroad especially altered tourists’ impressions of the landscape around them. The railroads “led to a new aesthetic perception of the

¹⁰² Barker 397.

¹⁰³ Barker 395.

¹⁰⁴ Bätzing 143. “Leitsymbole der neu errichteten Infrastrukturen sind die riesigen “Palast-Hotels” oder “Grand-Hotels” mit 200-300 Zimmern, die damals größten profanen Gebäude im Alpenraum...”

¹⁰⁵ Bätzing 144. “... orientiert sich an einem aristokratischen Lebensstil (einschließlich Bällen, Theater-, Opern- und Konzertaufführungen), den sie mitten im Hochgebirge, in unmittelbarer Nähe zur Natur, zelebriert – gerade das Nebeneinander von großstädtischer Kultur und “wilder” Natur macht den besonderen Reiz aus.”

¹⁰⁶ Barker 396.

alpine landscape from the moving train, one in which the landscape “flew by” the passenger window, thereby dynamizing the experience of the landscape.”¹⁰⁷ New cable lifts, 60 of which were built between 1924 and 1940, provided another variant of the alpine experience; “the fast, soundless and near-vertical ascent caused fear and vertigo at first, which gave way to a new form of landscape apperception.”¹⁰⁸ As one passenger on the Nordkettenbahn in Innsbruck wrote in the visitor’s register, the alpine thrill-ride provided an adrenaline rush:

It’s not just ten panoramas that surround us, it’s a thousand, an innumerable number of panoramas. Landscape is no longer a static picture, inactive, unmoving, a lyric poem. Landscape has become dynamic, movement, action and struggle. Landscape as a storyline, landscape as drama!¹⁰⁹

The alpine railroad enabled not only new adventures for tourists, but also provided a symbol of the rising nation, especially in Austria, where the metaphor of ascent coincided with middle-class aspirations of social ascent.¹¹⁰ The symbolic value of the alpine railway also rested to no small degree on its highly technological character, leading some observers to imagine the train as a “sentry of civilization.”¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Bätzing 144. “führen zu einer neuen ästhetischen Wahrnehmung der alpinen Landschaft aus dem fahrenden Zug, bei der die Landschaft vor dem Zugfenster “vorbeifliegt,” das Landschaftserlebnis also dynamisiert wird.” See also Wolfgang Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey. The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century, trans. Anselm Hollo (New York: Berg, 1986).

¹⁰⁸ Bätzing 145. “der schnelle, lautlose und fast senkrechte Aufstieg löst zuerst Angst und Schwindel, dann aber eine neue Form der Landschaftswahrnehmung aus.”

¹⁰⁹ Qtd. in Bernhard Tschofen, Berg, Kultur, Moderne. Volkskundliches aus den Alpen (Wien: Sonderzahl, 1999) 201. “Es sind nicht zehn Panoramen, die sich uns erschließen, es sind tausend, es sind unendlich viele. Landschaft ist auf einmal kein stilles Bild mehr, nichts Ruhendes, Beharrendes, kein lyrisches Gedicht. Sie ist Geschehen geworden, Bewegung, Aktion und Kampf. Landschaft als Handlung, Landschaft als Drama!”

¹¹⁰ Tschofen 59.

¹¹¹ Tschofen 59.

What did all of these tourists do once they arrived in the Alps? Many tourists traveled to the curative waters of the alpine baths, or enjoyed a summer vacation known as the *Sommerfrische*.¹¹² Middle-class vacationers typically spent their vacation time in this way thanks to the advent of leisure time and the accumulation of enough financial means to travel.

The middle classes in Germany were able to take “time off” from their work and had the financial means to spend money on travels and accommodation, but they did not have the necessary means to travel to distant places. Toward the nineteenth century they developed their own kind of vacation: the *Sommerfrische*. As the name suggests, the emphasis was on fresh air, as opposed to the air of the city. The *Sommerfrische* was a counter-world to the urban working place. It was spent in rural surroundings, close to nature, in simple conditions, with an emphasis on quiet and health. Due to the financial limitations, those places could not be too far away from the cities and had to be easily accessible by train. That tendency led to the creation of tourist centers, especially in the mountains (such as the Harz mountains, the Riesengebirge and Sächsische Schweiz) and the great forests (such as the Black Forest, or the Thuringian Forest), which offered fresh air, plenty of nature, and environments that were not even remotely reminiscent of the big urban centers.¹¹³

Because these tourists were seeking relaxation, they typically returned to the same hotel or pension for their vacations, generating steady revenues for hotel owners and “thus ensuring a measure of financial stability that enabled the further development of that new tourist industry for the middle classes.”¹¹⁴ Such vacation styles also reflected a more general interest in health and beauty.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Wolfgang Hackl, *Eingeborene im Paradies. Die literarische Wahrnehmung des alpinen Tourismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Tübingen: Niemeyer Verlag, 2004) 41-48.

¹¹³ Jacob Borut, “Antisemitism in Tourist Facilities in Weimar Germany,” *Yad Vashem Studies XXVIII*, ed. David Silberklang (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000) 10.

¹¹⁴ Jacob Borut, “Antisemitism in Tourist Facilities in Weimar Germany,” *Yad Vashem Studies XXVIII*, ed. David Silberklang (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000) 10-11.

¹¹⁵ See Michael Hau, *The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany, 1890-1930* (Chicago: U of Chicago P, 2003).

Wherever the railroad arrived, however, tourism growth was explosive. The following statistics show how Davos, a popular resort near Zürich (and incidentally also the location of the sanatorium in Thomas Mann’s famous novel, *Der Zauberberg* (*The Magic Mountain*, 1924)), grew once the railroad arrived in 1890:

Year	Number of available beds	Number of yearly guests	Total of nights spent
1886	1000	6830	N.A.
1890	1250	10167	N.A.
1895	1650	13220	449255
1900	2100	15800	614562
1905	2650	20042	753390
1910	3250	26656	993634
1915	4100	12474	726633 ¹¹⁶

The growth spurred by the railroad did not apply only to Davos; it also extended all over the Swiss Alps. By 1912, a survey conducted on behalf of the Swiss Association of Innkeepers revealed that there were 12,640 hotels, pensions and inns in the country, with a total of 387,744 beds; “with 43,136 employees, the hotel industry was the second largest employer in Switzerland, just behind the total of all mechanical industries and slightly ahead of the railways.”¹¹⁷ 1912 also represented a watershed for alpine tourism; “the number both of hotels and beds, which declined during World War I, did not again reach those levels until the mid-1960s.”¹¹⁸ Indeed, as the cultural geographer Werner Bätzing writes, the “Belle-Époque phase,” which he dates from 1880 to 1914 and describes as an alpine experience dominated by the modern amenities of the hotel and the

¹¹⁶ Christian Jost, Der Einfluss des Fremdenverkehrs auf Wirtschaft und Bevölkerung in der Landschaft Davos, diss., U of Bern, 1951, 41. Qtd. in Bernard 116.

¹¹⁷ Bernard 169.

¹¹⁸ Bernard 169.

railroad, would have been unthinkable without the transportation infrastructure of the railway.¹¹⁹

THE ALPINE RAILWAY DEBATES

As the cultural historian Wolfgang Schivelbusch has pointed out, few technological innovations of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries represented progress and civilization as much as the railroad.¹²⁰ Train travel inaugurated a new age of travel that transformed notions of time, space and landscape. The difficulties of traveling between two points, and the time required for travel, were significantly reduced. The railroad, produced by the symbiosis of engineering know-how and capital investment, reified the very spirit of progress and modernity.

In the context of the Alps, however, the railroad threatened to destroy the very landscape to which it enabled travel. As early as 1870, one observer noted that

Many alpine enthusiasts are pleased whenever new railroads are built that enable expeditious travel between major cities, but they fear that the proliferation of the railroad will flood the mountains with tourists, thereby destroying many of the pleasures associated with the Alps.¹²¹

Fear of the railroad and its impact on the Alps was also mixed with fascination. The highly respected mountaineer Ludwig Purtscheller wrote of this ambivalence in 1894:

Mountaineering experienced another boom through the great development of transportation networks. Just like the entire [nineteenth] century, mountaineering and hiking was impressed with the stamp of the railroad; even in the most remote

¹¹⁹ Bätzing 143.

¹²⁰ Wolfgang Schivelbusch, The Railway Journey. The Industrialization of Time and Space in the Nineteenth Century, trans. Anselm Hollo (New York: Berg, 1986).

¹²¹ Tschofen 186. "Viele Alpenfreunde [...] sind zufrieden, wenn jene Bahnen, welche das schnelle Erreichen der Hauptpartien ermöglichen, gebaut sind, und fürchten von der allzustarken Vermehrung eine Ueberfluthung des Gebirges von Touristen und damit eine Beeinträchtigung vieler Genüsse!"

alpine valleys, the whistle of the locomotive sounded like the wake-up call of a new age.¹²²

Railroads brought the mountains nearer to the cities than ever before, enabling members of the Alpenverein and anyone else interested in visiting the Alps to travel to the mountains. The railroad posed both threats and opportunities to the Alps, alpine organizations and their members.

Mountaineers and alpine clubs alike were unsure how to respond to the railroad's advance. The cultural anthropologist Bernhard Tschofen asserts that this ambivalence was rooted in the class identity of the alpine clubs, whose members hailed overwhelmingly from the educated upper-middle class. Doctors, lawyers, academics and businessmen, these Alpenverein members firmly believed in upward class mobility, and their activity as mountaineers re-enacted their own social ascent in their physical ascent of mountains. During the 1920s and 1930s in Austria, the alpine railroads "were stylized as evidence of an ascending nation, thereby associated with a well-established bourgeois 'alpine' aesthetic – the metaphor of ascent seemed self-evident."¹²³ Indeed, the educated bourgeoisie, with their aesthetics of ascent, seemed particularly predisposed to view the expansion of the railroad as further evidence of the possibilities created by applied knowledge.

The arrival of the railroad also corresponded with the narrative of progress and technological innovation. In the context of the Alps, this narrative depicted mountains not as an aesthetically pleasing landscape, but rather as the ultimate engineering challenge.

¹²² Tschofen 185. "Einen weiteren Aufschwung nahm der Alpinismus durch die grossartige Entwicklung der Verkehrseinrichtungen. Wie das ganze Jahrhundert, so steht auch die Touristik unter dem Zeichen des Verkehrs, und selbst in die entlegensten Alpenthaler hinein dringt der Pfiff der Lokomotive wie der Weckruf einer neuen Zeit."

¹²³ Tschofen 59. "Die Bahnen der zwanziger und dreißiger Jahre etwa, in sterreich zu Zeichen des nationalen Aufstiegs stilisiert, konnten erfolgreich an eine gut eingefuhrte burgerliche Alpensthetik anknupfen. Die Aufstiegsmetapher bot sich da geradezu an."

The locomotive, “a mysterious floating vehicle cast as the vanguard of civilization,” inflected the Alps with new valences; “the mythological qualities of the technical world infused the cult of the heights with new significance.”¹²⁴ Railroad construction in the Alps was narrated in the same manner as a successful ascent, incorporating many of the attributes associated with mountaineering, such as heroism, courage, self-mastery and the overcoming of interior fears and external obstacles: “in the confrontation with the elemental powers of nature, a powerful narrative emerged, a story of mastery and overcoming, that took on the heroic overtones of a mountain falling to its (technical) conqueror.”¹²⁵ The intersection of these multiple narratives of ascent, whether social, cultural, national or technical, confronted mountaineers with a dilemma: how could they reconcile their belief in modernity and progress with their self-proclaimed mission to preserve the pristine natural environment of the Alps?

The alpine press, as well as alpine organizations, viewed the untrammled growth of railroads and cable cars in the Alps as an ominous development. Mountaineers were especially opposed to the cog railroads and cable cars built in the 1920s, which in many cases transported tourists directly to mountain summits. Several construction projects, including the Zugspitzbahn in Germany and the Raxbahn and Großglockner rail system in Austria, drew heavy criticism from the alpine press. Gustav Müller, a director of the Alpenverein, described the Zugspitzbahn as nothing less than the “mechanization, materialization, capitalization and industrialization of the mountains,”¹²⁶ which the Alpenverein promised to fight tooth and nail: “we raise the strongest possible objections

¹²⁴ Tschofen 59.

¹²⁵ Tschofen 59-60.

¹²⁶ MDÖAV (1925): 104. “... die Mechanisierung, Materialisierung, Kapitalisierung und Industrialisierung der Berge.”

to the construction of a train on the Zugspitze, the highest peak and towering symbol of Germany.”¹²⁷ One commentator noted that railroad construction contradicted the Alpenverein’s mission, “the preservation of the pristine beauty [of the Alps] and thereby promoting and strengthening love for the *Heimat*.”¹²⁸ Numerous articles pointed out that these projects were unnecessary, that they destroyed the landscape, and that they would facilitate massive overcrowding on already popular mountain peaks. Some observers detected more insidious forces at work:

One way of looking at the world (*Weltanschauung*) – the materialistic one – wants to turn the mountain into an economic goldmine of tourism, without any consideration of how that would destroy the mountain’s character, and thereby sustain the population that depends on tourism for a living. The other [*Weltanschauung*] – the idealistic one – wants to protect the mountain world as a great natural treasure, to preserve it as a mountaineer’s *Heimat* in the knowledge that such preservation of primitive nature involves physical activity and consequently awakens spiritual conditions and ethical strengths, which gives the mountaineering experience its mysterious allure.¹²⁹

In the case of the Großglockner rail project in Austria, proposed construction plans unleashed a firestorm of controversy, with Alpenverein members describing the proposal as both the desecration of a national treasure and an aesthetically offensive move:

Then arises the danger that the highest mountain that has been left to Austria will be defaced by a technological project, made to bow before our feet... The view of the Großglockner from the Pasterze is one of the greatest images in our Alps.

¹²⁷ MDÖAV (1925): 108. “Sie erhebt vornehmlich den schärfsten Einspruch gegen den Bau einer Bahn auf die *Zugspitze*, den höchsten Gipfel und das ragende Wahrzeichen deutscher Erde.”

¹²⁸ “Um den Zweck des Alpenvereins.” *Der Bergsteiger* 15 April 1927: 95. “...die Erhaltung der Schönheit und Ursprünglichkeit und dadurch die Förderung und Stärkung der Liebe zur *Heimat*...”

¹²⁹ MDÖAV (1925): 46. “Die eine Weltanschauung – materialistische – will die Berge ohne Rücksicht auf die damit verbundene Zerstörung ihrer Eigenart zu verkehrswirtschaftlichen Goldgruben machen, aus denen dann einige Interessentengruppen, dann in zweiter Linie die umliegende, vom Fremdenverkehr lebende Bevölkerung Gewinn ziehen sollen; die andere – ideelle – möchte die Bergwelt als Naturschutzgebiet im Großen, als Bergsteiger*Heimat* gewahrt wissen in der Erkenntnis, daß nur die Erhaltung einer möglichst ursprünglichen Natur im Verein mit körperlicher Betätigung und als deren Folge jene seelischen Zustände und sittlichen Kräfte wachruft, die den geheimnisvollen Reiz bergsteigerischen Erlebens bilden.”

Imagine how awful it would look if a cable was strung over the glacier, all the way up to Adlersruhe.¹³⁰

In every single one of these cases, however, mountaineering organizations were unable to prevent the construction of these transportation projects. Instead, the Alpenverein discourse on railways shifted from prevention to accommodation and boycotting. As the case of the Raxbahn shows, the Alpenverein wrestled with the question of whether “real” mountaineers should use the railroads and cable cars, or whether such amenities should be left to the tourist masses.

The story of the Raxbahn offers an exemplary instance of how mountaineers unsuccessfully argued against the industrialization of the Alps, and how, after the projects were completed, they reconciled their alpine ideals with new physical realities. The Rax, a mountain located near Vienna, had long been a tourist destination when, in 1913, the railroad authorities began planning construction of a cable car system, the first of its kind in Austria, to transport materials and passengers from the village of Hirschwang to the top of the mountain. World War I forced the authorities to delay the project indefinitely, and it was not until 1924 that the project was again introduced for consideration. Several mountaineers and organizations protested against the construction of the Raxbahn, claiming that the new cable car would cause such an increase in tourist traffic that the mountain would, in effect, disappear as a pristine natural area.

In November 1924, the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* reported, with relief and incredulity, that the Rax project had been cancelled. The paper noted that the cancellation was prompted by “neither ethical nor aesthetic, but rather sanitary reasons.”¹³¹ The

¹³⁰ MDÖAV (1933): 276. “Damit erscheint die Gefahr, daß der Gipfel des höchsten Berges, der Österreich noch verblieben ist, durch ein technisches Werk verunstaltet wird, in unmittelbare Nähe gerückt... Der Anblick des Großglockners von der Pasterze ist eines der großartigsten Bilder in unseren Alpen. Man stelle sich seine Verunstaltung vor, wenn ein Drahtseil über den Gletscher bis auf die Adlersruhe emporgeführt würde.”

¹³¹ “Das Projekt der Rax-Seilbahn gescheitert!” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 7 Nov 1924: 3.

Viennese authorities, under a new law protecting the city's water sources, issued a report claiming that the projected traffic enabled by the Raxbahn would endanger the city's water supply. Although officials in Vienna acknowledged the "business opportunities" created by the Raxbahn (which included the construction of a hotel near the Rax's summit), the sole reason for their decision against the cable car was to prevent the contamination of municipal water sources. The municipal authorities in Vienna apparently had few qualms about furthering the tourism industry, as is evidenced by their consideration of the "business opportunities" and "the significance of the project for tourism."

Although alpine organizations could not claim success on the basis of the merit of their own arguments, they still welcomed the decision to cancel the Raxbahn; they triumphantly proclaimed, "yes, our good water protects us not only from sickness and death – but also from mountain railways!"¹³² One cartoon presented the failure of the Raxbahn as a victory of mountaineers over tourists. A strapping mountaineer, leaning against a signpost, equipped with the iconographic rope, ice axe, backpack and hiking boots, grins down at a fat tourist who sits reading the news of the project's failure. The caption reads, "what is sorrow for some means joy to others."¹³³

Their celebration was short-lived. In the early summer of 1925, construction on the Rax cable car began. In a tone of resignation, it was reported that, although people may have had opinions for and against the Raxbahn, it was now clear that the project was going to be built: "only the future will tell whether the advantages or disadvantages of tourism will be greater."¹³⁴ The alpine press reported cynically that, "wherever a profit is

¹³² "Das Ende der Raxbahn," Der Bergsteiger 7 Nov 1924: 369.

¹³³ "Das Raxbahnprojekt gescheitert?" Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 14 Nov 1924: 3.

¹³⁴ "Es wird Ernst mit der Raxbahn," Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 1 May 1925: 3.

to be made, then such railways will continue to be built.”¹³⁵ The *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* also complained that, once the project was completed in the fall of 1925, the consequences of the project would become apparent during the ski season of 1925-1926: “we will see how skiers – at least those who have forgotten their own honor and duty – will allow themselves, without any effort of their own, to be pulled up the Rax.” The article urged mountaineers not to be too discouraged; perhaps the ease of getting to the top of the Rax with a cable car would decrease traffic on other mountains, where “we true mountaineers can go on undisturbed.”¹³⁶

The case of the Raxbahn indicates how mountaineers and their alpine organizations were powerless to stop the construction of new rail projects in the Alps, and the reaction of the alpine clubs and the alpine press suggest how their failure to stem the tide of tourism stoked a great deal of resentment and fuelled an increasingly elitist attitude. Mountaineers blamed capitalism in general and the tourism industry in particular for the degradation of the mountain environment, claiming that profit-motivated investors were ruining the landscape as they commercialized it. Alpine organizations also adopted an increasingly critical stance toward the masses of tourists and leisure hikers that arrived in the wake of such projects, accusing the masses of engaging in and fostering a new attitude that considered mountains as nothing more than commodities for casual consumption. Mountaineers warned that modern railways and resort hotels were presenting and propagating a new and dangerous attitude towards the Alps, an attitude that “real” mountaineers deplored for its lack of respect and honor, an attitude that they characterized as mindless mass consumption. Mountaineers strongly opposed these

¹³⁵ “Wie die Raxbahn aussehen wird,” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 25 June 1925: 3.

¹³⁶ “Wie die Raxbahn aussehen wird,” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 25 June 1925: 3.

developments, and they began in the 1920s to present themselves as the true stewards of the mountains, as the only organizations really capable of honoring and preserving the landscape for future generations.

There were some, however, who did not believe that the division between mountaineer and tourist should be such a clear divide. Speaking at the opening of the new Hochmölbinghütte near Graz in Austria, the mountaineer Adolf Kutschera had this to say about the raging debates over construction in the Alps:

Really extreme mountaineers want to maintain the mountain's original loneliness by not allowing any huts to be built, no hiking paths and no trail markers ... The Austrian Tourist Club is not an association of summiteers and wall-climbers, but it also doesn't build palatial huts where someone goes to dinner in evening wear. Our club is for the great multitude of mountaineers and welcomes them all.¹³⁷

Yet the "extreme mountaineers" disagreed with such magnanimous gestures to faceless masses of so-called mountaineers; instead, they urged a different arrangement: "valleys, low spots, and easily approachable mountains may have been given up to mass tourism, but certain isolated high mountain ranges must remain untouched."¹³⁸

To ensure that some alpine areas remained off-limits to mass tourism, an extremely vocal and very influential minority of mountaineers began pushing in the mid-1920s to include *Naturschutz* (nature conservation) in the Alpenverein's mission; in 1927, the alpine club adopted an amendment declaring that "the goal of the German and Austrian Alpenverein is to preserve the beauty and source of nature, thereby tending and

¹³⁷ "Keine Vereinigungen von Wandathleten – aber auch keine Hüttenpaläste!" *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 26 September 1924: 1. "Bergsteiger ganz extremer Richtung wollen die Bergsamskeit in ihrer Ursprünglichkeit dadurch erhalten, daß sie keine Hütten dulden, keine Wege bauen und markieren wollen ... Der Oesterreichische Touristenklub ist keine Vereinigung von Gipfelstürmern oder Wandathleten, er baut aber auch keine Hüttenpaläste, in denen man im Smoking zum Diner erscheint, er wendet sich an die große Menge der Bergsteiger und heißt sie alle willkommen."

¹³⁸ *MDÖAV* (1925): 204. "Täler, niedere Lagen, leicht zugängliche Gruppen seien dem Massenverkehr völlig preisgegeben, bestimmte einsame Hochgebirgsgruppen aber müssen unberührt bleiben."

strengthening the love for the German *Heimat*.”¹³⁹ During the debates leading up to the adoption of this amendment, there were dire pronouncements about the possible future of the Alps. Those agitating for *Naturschutz* cast their arguments in terms of preserving not only the Alps, but also the German homeland:

If the innermost essence of the mountains, their original wildness, changes, then a paradise will have been lost, and a lost paradise never returns. That is why we believe it is time for the Alpenverein to dedicate its energies to the protection of the mountain world. This is not only about *Naturschutz*; it also about maintaining the Germanness of the German *Heimat* and the German mountains.¹⁴⁰

All of the lofty discourse about German *Natur*, *Heimat* and mountains, however, seemed to suggest that the Alpenverein wanted to preserve certain areas of the Alps not just for the sake of future generations and the nation, but also to exclude tourists. One observer made this claim explicitly, noting that the Alpenverein

has led this fight not only because of the imperatives of natural conservation ... but also to keep the mountain summit's pristine nature safe from the people who are brought here *en masse* by lifts; they fit the jagged peaks about as well as a fist in the eye.¹⁴¹

Despite the Alpenverein's leading role in opening up the Alps to tourism during the late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth centuries, this new emphasis on creating alpine enclaves for real mountaineers seemed to contradict the Alpenverein's prewar attitudes towards tourism. During the years of the Weimar Republic, though, the Alpenverein began

¹³⁹ MDÖAV (1927): 224. “Zweck des Deutschen und Oesterreichischen Alpenvereins ist, ihre [Nature's] Schönheit und Ursprünglichkeit zu erhalten und dadurch die Liebe zur deutschen *Heimat* zu pflegen und zu stärken.”

¹⁴⁰ MDÖAV (1927): 226. “Werden die Berge in ihrem inneren Wesen, in ihrer Ursprünglichkeit und Wildheit verändert, dann geht ein Paradies verloren und ein verlorenes Paradies kehrt nie wieder. Deshalb hielten wir es an der Zeit, daß der Alpenverein sich energisch schützend vor die Bergwelt stellt. Es handelt sich nicht nur um den Naturschutz, es gilt auch die deutsche *Heimat* und die deutsche Bergwelt deutsch zu erhalten.”

¹⁴¹ ZDÖAV (1929): 341. “[Der Alpenverein] hat diesen Kampf geführt nicht allein aus Gründen des Naturschutzes ... auch aus dem Grunde der Reinhaltung der Bergesgipfel von dem Publikum, das diese Aufzüge in Massen hinaufbringen und das zu den Gipfelfelsen paßt, wie die Faust auf das Auge.”

creating very clear distinctions about who could tread in the sacred space of the Alps, developing an ideal type to inhabit their ideal space.

THE ALPINE HÜTTE DEBATES

One example of the boundaries established by the Alpenverein concerned its alpine huts. Several major questions preoccupied mountaineers in their discussions about their alpine properties. What should the purpose of the huts be: a primitive shelter for mountaineers, or a lodge for tourists? What were the criteria for the construction of new huts and the expansion of existing ones? Who should be permitted to use them, and at what cost? What role did alpine huts play in the attraction of tourism, and how did the increase in visitors affect the alpine landscape?

The Alpenverein huts came in a variety of forms. Some were merely primitive lean-tos, useful only for escaping from a storm or for providing shelter for an otherwise harrowing bivouac. Others were simple, quaint structures with a stove and a table; electricity and running water were considered luxuries in these remote locations. Over time, some huts added kitchens and separate rooms. In strong contrast with the palatial hotels in the valleys, with their grand entertainments and modern amenities, the alpine hut provided a true getaway from the depredations of city life. Even the architecture of the huts, which followed traditional alpine forms, provided a space for mountaineers to retreat into the nostalgia of a traditional way of life.

The problem with the alpine huts was primarily one of scarcity; there were simply not enough facilities to handle the astronomical demands that mass tourism placed upon the Alpenverein's infrastructure. From 1913 to 1928, the number of alpine huts increased modestly, while the number of visitors to the Alps skyrocketed. In 1913, there were 143,585 visitors to the 284 alpine huts in the Bavarian and Austrian Alps; in 1928,

401,198 visitors were recorded at 308 alpine huts in the same area.¹⁴² The number of huts increased by 8% over fifteen years, hardly enough to accommodate the 280% explosion in the number of visitors.

The various alpine clubs that owned and operated alpine huts faced a quandary. The German-Austrian Alpenverein, which owned the majority of the huts,¹⁴³ had built their huts to support the Alpenverein's main aim: "to expand and broaden the knowledge of the Alps in general, and to facilitate travel in the German and Austrian Alps."¹⁴⁴ During the 1920s, however, many commentators felt that the alpine clubs had unwittingly enabled *too much* travel in the Alps. Some mountaineers believed that the Alpenverein's explosive growth, and its success in enabling travel and tourism within the Alps, had created a mass phenomenon and unleashed "swarms of tourists" into formerly idyllic, peaceful mountain valleys.¹⁴⁵ Another commentator noted that the alpine clubs were facilitating "the unhealthy overcrowding of the Alps."¹⁴⁶ These swarms of tourists, the metaphoric equivalent of disease-bearing parasites infecting the otherwise curative landscape of the Alps, forced alpine organizations to reconsider the policies then in place for their alpine huts.

¹⁴² ZDÖAV (1929): 354. Table III.

¹⁴³ In 1906, the German-Austrian Alpenverein owned 214 huts; the Österreichische Touristenklub (Austrian Tourist Club), 47; the Österreichische Alpen-Club (Austrian alpine Club), 3; and the Österreichische Gebirgsverein (Austrian Mountain Club), 2. MDÖAV (1906): 243.

¹⁴⁴ Charter of the Deutscher und Österreichischer Alpenverein, unedited edition of 1876, qtd. in MDÖAV (1908): 219.

¹⁴⁵ Josef Enzensperger, Ein Bergsteigerleben. Alpine Aufsätze und Vorträge, Reisebriefe und Kerguelen-Tagebuch von Josef Enzensperger, ed. Akademischer Alpenverein München, 2nd. ed. (Munich: Alpenfreund-Verlag A.-G., 1924) 57.

¹⁴⁶ Eugen Guido Lammer, Jungborn. Bergfahrten und Höhengedanken eines einsamen Pfadsuchers (Vienna: Österreichischer Alpen-Klub, 1922) 259.

Before World War I, the alpine huts had opened their doors to all visitors, originally offering a limited food menu and primitive lodging, usually a mattress on the floor of a communal room.¹⁴⁷ As more and more visitors arrived at the huts, the menus were expanded, alcoholic drinks were served, and individual rooms were offered along with communal accommodations. These expansions necessitated the hiring of permanent staff to run the kitchen, serve customers, keep the hearth fires burning, and generally maintain the property. In 1894, 44% of the huts were seasonally or permanently staffed; by 1909, this percentage had increased to 83.4%.¹⁴⁸ As amenities continued to improve and the alpine experience was made ever more *gemütlich*, the number of visitors to the alpine huts continued to grow.

The increasing comfort afforded by the alpine huts also attracted people whom the alpine organizations considered undesirable. A cartoon published in the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* shows a couple walking up a well-maintained hiking path. The man has a cigarette in his mouth. His hair is unkempt, and he wears an unbuttoned shirt over an undershirt that reads, 'Servus!' ('cheers!'), suggesting that he is headed straight for the bar. His scrawny legs disappear into stretched-out socks and ill-fitting hiking boots. His female companion wears a black beret and looks up at him seductively, her generous décolleté provocatively framed in a tight black shirt. She wears knee-length socks and high heels – hardly the proper attire for an alpine hike. She also carries a lute, suggesting that there will be music and merriment later. They are standing in front of a sign that

¹⁴⁷ During the War, Dr. Karl Müller, director of the Alpine Museum in Munich, described the military's construction in the Alps along the southern front: "I had feared that our mountains would have been mutilated by such construction, but quite to the contrary: these little brown wooden huts that snuggle up the mountains everywhere, offer a charming picture and captivate the observer." "Ich hatte befürchtet, daß die Berge durch die Bauten 'verschandelt' seien, aber im Gegenteil: diese braunen Holzhüttchen, die sich überall so innig an den Berg anschmiegen, bieten immer wieder ein reizendes Bild und entzücken den Beschauer." *MDÖAV* (1917): 152.

¹⁴⁸ *ZDÖAV* (1909): 341.

points the way to an alpine hut. The sign advertises available rooms, an excellent kitchen, special wines, and a gypsy band; also, the hut is open until three o'clock in the morning. Behind the couple headed to the party, a mountaineer and his wife look at them in disgust, the wife scratching her head, unable to believe her own eyes. The message to the reader is clear: without revisions in hut policies, the huts would cease to be the peaceful province of healthy mountaineers; instead, they would become a destination for smoking, drinking libertines.¹⁴⁹

After World War I, the German-Austrian Alpenverein enacted new policies in an attempt to limit the number of visitors and exclude non-mountaineers. In 1919, the Alpenverein agreed that “the construction of future huts ... as well as decisions about whether or not to staff these huts ... should be guided exclusively by the needs of mountaineers,” indicating a return to the more primitive conditions that had previously prevailed at the huts.¹⁵⁰ In 1921, at the Alpenverein’s annual general assembly, the club’s leadership decided that members of other alpine clubs would pay double the member’s price, and non-affiliated mountaineers would pay four times the member’s price.¹⁵¹ This policy sought both to increase revenues at the huts and exclude non-members, thereby slowing the flood of visitors and preserving the alpine experience for Alpenverein members.

At their general assembly of 1923, held in Tölz, a small town south of Munich, the German-Austrian Alpenverein agreed upon a sweeping set of new policies regarding their alpine huts. The so-called Tölz Guidelines served a dual purpose: they identified, at

¹⁴⁹ “Zur Hüttenreform,” Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 17 Aug 1923: 4.

¹⁵⁰ MDÖAV (1919): 131. “Bei dem künftigen Bau von Unterkunftshütten und Wegen, ferner bei der Bewirtschaftung der Hütten sollen in erster Linie die Bedürfnisse der Bergsteiger maßgebend sein.”

¹⁵¹ MDÖAV (1922): 28-29.

least from the Alpenverein's perspective, key problems with the huts, and enacted policies to combat these problems. As a historical document, the Tölz Guidelines provide insight into the changing role adopted by the Alpenverein: rather than facilitate access for all to the Alps, the club was becoming increasingly exclusive, promulgating normative rules in an attempt to foster the 'proper' alpine experience.

The twelve paragraphs of the Tölz Guidelines established criteria for the future construction of alpine huts and the administration of those already in operation. The only acceptable reason for new construction was to satisfy demand for mountaineers, not tourists. These new huts were to be spartan; sleeping arrangements, for example, would consist of nothing more than a mattress and a blanket. Expansion of existing huts would only be allowed if the new space were used for communal rooms with mattresses.¹⁵² The alpine hut experience, according to the Alpenverein, was best enjoyed in the most primitive of conditions.

Most of the Tölz Guidelines affected day-to-day administration of the huts. Advertisements for the alpine huts in train stations and inns, as well as maps posted on kiosks that showed visitors how to find the huts, were to be removed. For huts that were staffed, it was suggested that no alcoholic beverages be served. In this matter, some discretion was allowed to the local administration, but staff were urged to limit the sales of alcohol as much as possible. Staff were also told to deny entrance to *Sommerfrischler* (summer visitors), "persons who have nothing to do with mountaineering," and, oddly enough, film crews. Feather beds were replaced with blankets. Musical instruments and gramophones were removed from the premises. Beginning at ten o'clock in the evening, a noise ordinance demanded absolute silence. Persons unable to produce proper

¹⁵² "Richtlinien für Alpenvereinhütten und Wege," Der Bergsteiger 28 September 1923: 42.

identification were to be ejected from the premises. Unmarried couples could not sleep in the same bed or room.¹⁵³ In other words, the alpine party was over.

The alpine press welcomed the Tölz Guidelines, as a cartoon from the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* illustrates.¹⁵⁴ In the left half of the frame, a large, clean-cut man wields an enormous broom, sweeping the front porch of an alpine hut. His sleeves are rolled up, his mountain boots laced, and an Edelweiss pin on his shirt identifies him as an Alpenverein member. Behind him, tacked to the front door, are the new guidelines. The right half of the frame shows everything being swept away by the mountaineer's broom: architectural drawings for a new hut; a sign indicating that the nearest hut is only two hours away; a huge feather bed, complete with a wooden bed frame; a gramophone; a wooden barrel of beer; a bottle of champagne, the cork springing out; an empty beer mug; a man and a woman from the city, holding each other as they fly through the air; and a corpulent fellow in traditional alpine costume, spilling his beer in one hand and holding his pipe in the other. As this cartoon suggests, the Tölz Guidelines gave hut administrators the tools they needed to clean house.

While the majority of alpine organizations approved of the Tölz Guidelines, some commentators voiced their reservations about the increasingly exclusive policies enacted by the Alpenverein. One observer in Munich reminded the Alpenverein of their original mission – namely, to facilitate the enjoyment of the Alps for as many people as possible – and warned against elitist attitudes that threatened the Alpenverein's egalitarian quality:

It is not possible to reserve the mountains for mountaineers. It is also not possible to close off the mountains to alpine enthusiasts and hikers, the majority of which are just as excited about the Alps as so-called mountaineers. The German-

¹⁵³ "Richtlinien für Alpenvereinhütten und Wege," 42.

¹⁵⁴ "Hüttenkehrhaus in Tölz," *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 7 Sept 1923: 3.

Austrian Alpenverein is not just a club for mountaineers; the overwhelming majority of its 200,000 members belong to the ranks of leisure hikers.¹⁵⁵

Another commentator in Vienna likewise viewed the intended exclusivity of the Tölz Guidelines as a contradiction of the Alpenverein's stated goals, going so far as to accuse the Alpenverein of neglecting its national political mission:

The Alpenverein cannot be an exclusive club of practicing mountaineers ... such a focus would be narrow-minded egoism. Our club cannot afford such exclusivity, especially considering that our most pressing task is the rehabilitation of our *entire Volk*, meaning *all* of its members, regardless of their class. We must act energetically and wholeheartedly, and work together toward this goal.¹⁵⁶

These two criticisms of the Tölz Guidelines indicate the difficulties facing the alpine huts and the organizations that owned and operated them. By catering solely to the needs of serious mountaineers, the Alpenverein risked losing members that were more interested in leisure hiking, along with the financial dues that made the huts possible in the first place. Furthermore, restricting access and services at the alpine huts jeopardized the Alpenverein's leadership role among the alpine organizations. As one observer noted, "if the Alpenverein gives up its role in opening up the Alps to travelers ... it also gives up its leading position in these affairs."¹⁵⁷ If the Alpenverein limited the use of its huts, it would

¹⁵⁵ MDÖAV (1925): 187. "Es ist nicht möglich, die Berge für die 'Bergsteiger,' unter welche Bezeichnung man jetzt die eigentlichen Hochtouristen versteht, zu reservieren und für die tausende von Bergfreunden und Bergwanderern, unter denen die Mehrzahl ebenso naturbegeistert ist wie die 'Bergsteiger,' abzusperren. Der D. und Oe.A.V. ist kein Verein von 'Bergsteigern,' sondern die überwiegende Anzahl der über 200,000 Mitglieder gehören den Bergwanderern an."

¹⁵⁶ Eduard Pichl, "Der Deutsche und Oesterreichische Alpenverein: *Ein Alpenverein oder Der Alpenverein*," MDÖAV (1925): 93. Emphasis in original. "Der Alpenverein kann nicht ausschließlich ein Verein von ausübenden Bergsteigern sein oder gar einen hochtouristischen Stempel tragen, es wäre das ein Standpunkt engherziger Selbstsucht, auf den unser Verein sich nicht stellen darf angesichts der dringenden Aufgabe, an der Wiedergesundung unseres *ganzen Volkes* also *aller* seiner Stände und Schichten, (...), tatkräftig und ernsthaft mitzuarbeiten."

¹⁵⁷ MDÖAV (1925): 187. "Wenn der Verein seine Erschließungstätigkeit aufgibt, (...) so verzichtet er damit auf seine führende Stellung."

also forfeit its influence and ability, as the largest alpine organization, to guide alpine development policy.

One critic of the Tölz Guidelines pointed out the positive aspects of the Alpenverein's activities in the Alps, including the construction and maintenance of the alpine huts. The huts did not only provide convenient shelter for mountaineers and hikers; they also provided a means of economic sustenance for the local alpine population:

Some Alpenverein sections and members who are against the construction of alpine huts fail to realize the important role that the huts play in the life of the local alpine villagers. The huts provide an essential means of support for the *Heimat*-loving indigenous population.¹⁵⁸

The alpine population undoubtedly benefited from the presence of the huts. Aside from the initial labor required to build the huts, they were constantly provisioned with firewood, food, drinks, and other goods; some of these products were provided by local vendors, and many local villagers were involved in the transport of these goods. Additionally, increased traffic through alpine villages afforded the opportunity for local craftsmen to sell their goods and services.

However, the Alpenverein believed that too much traffic threatened the traditional alpine villages, and the pristine alpine landscape, with extinction. Carefully positioning their alpine huts as neither too exclusive nor too inclusive, the Alpenverein began to focus less on distinctions between serious mountaineers and leisure hikers than on the difference between Alpenverein members and the tourist industry: “many outside parties want, more or less, to use the Alpenverein as a spearhead for the tourist industry, to abuse

¹⁵⁸ MDÖAV (1925): 236. “Es wird von solchen Sektionen oder Personen, die gegen den Bau von Hütten sind, nicht erkannt, welche wichtige Rolle die Hütten im Alpenland spielen, welche unentbehrliche Stütze sie für die *Heimat*liebende und wirtschaftlich bodenständige Alpenbevölkerung sind.”

our special relationship with the alpine *Heimat*.”¹⁵⁹ The Tölz Guidelines were meant to ensure the preservation of the alpine experience, not to turn the Alps into a tourist attraction. Sensible, carefully considered growth, along with strict rules that enforced norms of acceptable, if somewhat ascetic, behavior at the huts, were meant to repel prurient pleasure-seekers and troublemakers. The huts would be the province of an orderly, well-behaved Alpenverein membership, not the forerunners of a tourist industry for the urban masses:

The Alpenverein’s strength lies in its strict adherence to its ideal goals. The Alpenverein must decisively put to rest these false accusations, which are appearing more frequently and in ever-widening circles, that the Alpenverein is furthering the interests of the tourism industry. The Alpenverein is a club for mountaineers and hikers, not a tourism industry association.¹⁶⁰

The Alpenverein played an enormous role in the opening of the Alps, which certainly aided rather than hindered the growth of tourism – however inadvertent or unintended this consequence may have been. The above denunciation, however, makes clear that the Tölz Guidelines attempted to address the problems associated with increased tourism by positioning the Alpenverein and its members as the rightful stewards of the Alps – vis-à-vis the tourism industry.

The debates in the 1920s about the alpine huts reveal how the Alpenverein attempted to negotiate and understand its own role in the rapidly developing mass tourism industry in the Alps. Distinctions made between mountaineers, leisure hikers and tourists indicated the Alpenverein’s commitment to fostering a culture that appreciated

¹⁵⁹ MDÖAV (1925): 237. “Ich glaube, daß sie nicht mehr und nicht weniger wollen, als unseren Alpenverein zum Vorspanndienst für die Fremdenverkehrsinteressen immer schönen, aber auch uns ans Herz gewachsenen *Heimat* zu mißbrauchen.”

¹⁶⁰ MDÖAV (1927): 196. “Das Heil des Vereins liegt in dem strengen Festhalten an seinen idealen Zielen; er muß daher die immer noch in weiten Kreisen verbreitete irrige Anschauung, als habe er die Interessen der Fremdenverkehrsindustrie zu fördern, entschieden abweisen. Der Alpenverein ist ein Verein von Bergsteigern und Bergwanderern, kein Fremdenverkehrsverein.”

and preserved the natural beauty of the Alps, balancing the ever-increasing interest in visiting the Alps with an eye towards conserving not only the alpine landscape, but also the local culture of the alpine village. The Alpenverein conceived of the huts as a compromise between tradition and progress, nature and civilization.

Yet the huts were only one alternative in the rapidly expanding tourism industry of the Alps. As the railroads brought more and more visitors, and hotels continued to entertain and house them, the Alpenverein began to define its membership more narrowly, excluding those it did not believe were worthy of the alpine experience. As its self-definition became more and more exclusive, the Alpenverein began to assert its strongly held views about who should be permitted within the sacred space of the Alps. The creation of a host of alpine “others,” against which the Alpenverein’s “true” mountaineers could define themselves, began to populate the Alpenverein’s imaginary alpine space with a new breed of idealized über-mountaineers. It is to this cast of characters that we now turn.

Chapter 3: Masculinity and the New Mountaineer

As alpine space became increasingly crowded with masses of tourists, mountaineers began to articulate, establish and refine a new model of the ideal mountaineer. The new mountaineer of the 1920s embodied a new masculinity that drew upon several different discourses of the Weimar Republic; body, behavior, morality and spirituality became the quintessential qualities of a mountaineer that properly represented both the German nation and the promise of an imperial future. As mountaineers debated the ideal attributes of the mountaineer and narrowed their definition of who belonged to this “brotherhood of the rope,” they simultaneously excluded those who did not fit in with their idealistic vision. Mountaineers looked down on tourists and women with benign condescension, considering them minor annoyances that became major only when their presence somehow disrupted the new mountaineer’s alpine experience. During the 1920s, however, the Alpenverein began actively to discriminate against Jewish members, crafting the mountaineer’s image along racist lines.

This chapter focuses on the discursive construction of the new mountaineer and considers the development of this ideal type in the context of other cultural debates in the Weimar Republic. The new mountaineer was supposed to incorporate a set of both physical and mental virtues that embraced the military narratives of heroism, hardness and sacrifice. These representations of a new (or rediscovered) masculinity could be found in a wide array of printed materials, and later in the cinema. Collections of essays by such alpine legends as Joseph Enzensperger and Eugen Guido Lammer, originally written in the late nineteenth century and then published in book form during the 1920s, provided a metaphorical map for mountaineers to follow, should they wish to retreat into

the nostalgia of an invented pre-modern past. Articles and illustrations in the many journals dedicated to mountaineering, including the Alpenverein's own publications, produced essays and illustrations that depicted the new mountaineer in stark contrast with his negative mirror-image, the tourist.

These representations of the "remasculated" mountaineer did not just set the mountaineer apart from weaker men; they provided a way to navigate the confusing thicket of modern life. The return to traditional virtues, such as stoicism in the face of adversity or bravery under the worst possible conditions, was presented in language reminiscent of a siege; the outside forces of tourism, encroaching railways and increasing alpine traffic all combined to endanger the new mountaineer's existence. To protect himself, the new mountaineer withdrew to the most dangerous possible places in the Alps, where he could steel his body and prepare his mind for combat against the forces of modernity.

PREDECESSORS

Articulations of the new mountaineer's masculinity in Germany drew heavily from pre-existing representations of the British mountaineer. The long tradition of alpine mountaineering in Britain, combined with the popular literature generated by many of these mountaineers, formed a rhetoric of mountaineering that envisioned the alpinist as a hyper-masculine representative of imperial power:

Mountaineers defined their climbing in terms of adventure and conquest, exploration and empire. Their rhetoric mattered; the language they used was not neutral. By comparing climbers in the Alps with explorers in Africa or the Arctic, mountaineers were not simply engaging in the pursuit of disinterested science. The 'conquest' of the mountain summit became the moment for symbolic reaffirmation of British imperial strength. Contemporaries explicitly drew the link between the climbing of mountains and the exercise of imperial power. Mountaineering and exploration legitimized the greater British Empire by transforming it from an abstraction into something tangible and personal. By

climbing mountains, professional men could participate in the expansive dimension of Britain's national identity.¹⁶¹

The relationship between mountain climbing and empire was based upon a well-articulated construct of what it meant to be masculine. Only masculine men whose mountaineering gave them “well-knit limbs, powerful lungs, erect gait, and fearless weather-beaten countenance, in exchange for physical timidity, dyspepsy, and a student's dreamy bashfulness and pallor,” could be the stewards of the British Empire.¹⁶²

There was a particular “look,” described in the mountaineering literature of the latter half of the nineteenth century, that marked the mountaineer as an alpine veteran. One British mountaineer wrote to his wife in 1857 that he had become “a stout faced burly, rough looking peasant, with hands and face of a deep copper colour and with long hair and dilapidated garments.”¹⁶³ The mountaineer's face bore the ravages of nature: “their lips are cracked, their cheeks are swollen, their eyes are bloodshot, their noses are peeled and indescribable.”¹⁶⁴ As the German explorer Alexander von Humboldt had also found on his ascent of Chimborazo almost a hundred years earlier, the mountains took their toll on climbers; Humboldt, observing how his expedition members were “bleeding from the gums, from the lips, the whites of the eyes were bloodshot,” and suffering from “blister-covered feet” and “bloody, torn hands,” gravely warned that the “bursting of lung vessels” and “hemorrhages” may occur at high altitudes.¹⁶⁵ These physical trials created an external appearance that was at once rugged, alpine and masculine.

¹⁶¹ Peter Holger Hansen, ““British Mountaineering, 1850-1914,” diss., Harvard U, 1991, 443.

¹⁶² J.D. Forbes, “Pedestrianism in Switzerland,” Quarterly Review 101 (April 1857): 287-8. Qtd. in Hansen 278.

¹⁶³ Qtd. in Hansen 275.

¹⁶⁴ Qtd. in Hansen 275.

¹⁶⁵ Alexander von Humboldt, “Auf den Chimborazo,” Dem Himmel entgegen, ed. Jan Ritten (Munich: Piper Verlag, 2002) 32-37.

Around the turn of the century, these stout British mountaineers “tended to stay within the spheres of the new imperial powers ... In areas where [imperial] authority was more closely contested, climbing was more important as a means of representing British paramountcy.”¹⁶⁶ British mountaineers extended their dominance from the European Alps to the mountains of New Zealand, Canada, the North American Rockies, Africa and the Himalayas. The historian Peter Holger Hansen describes one episode in mountaineering history that brings the imperial connotations of mountain climbing into sharp relief.¹⁶⁷ In 1889, Hans Meyer climbed Kilimanjaro, then located in German East Africa, and celebrated by raising the German flag on the summit and renaming the peak “Kaiser Wilhelm-Spitze” in honor of Emperor Wilhelm II. Ten years later in British East Africa, the British climber H.J. Mackinder climbed Mount Kenya. President James Bryce of the British Alpine Club described Kilimanjaro and Mount Kenya in terms of imperial competition:

When Kilimanjaro was, at the special request of the German Emperor, included within German East Africa, it was a matter of regret to many; but now we found in Kenya we had a mountain nearly as high, more striking in its physical features, more difficult of ascent, and possessing a flora quite as interesting as its German rival.¹⁶⁸

Such gamesmanship was common in the rhetoric of alpine writing, in Germany as in Britain. Mountaineers continued, though, to view themselves as a select international club of sporting gentlemen, however competitive and imperial their language might be. When the German mountaineer Joseph Enzensperger wrote about a trip to the Dolomites in 1896, he described the assembly of “most of the men who climbed without guides. All

¹⁶⁶ Hansen 425.

¹⁶⁷ Hansen 425-426.

¹⁶⁸ Alpine Journal 20 (1900): 156.

types were there – big and small, fat and skinny, silent and garrulous, German, Brits, Austrians, Swiss.”¹⁶⁹

Some German mountaineers believed that there were significant differences between British and German mountaineering, but they also agreed that the two nations’ climbers complemented one another.

If we look at the activities of the representatives of both nations and divide them according to their motivations, we could say that English alpinism owes its existence to the imperatives of sport, while German alpinism stemmed from scientific interest, or the pure human drive towards exploration. In any event, these two strains of mountaineering, both moments in the development of mountaineering organizations, have worked together to provide the push for every string of victories, which have become the common property of all mountaineers and a part of our cultural life.¹⁷⁰

Within the community of German mountaineers, however, subtle changes took place during the 1920s that sought to differentiate German masculinity from all other nations. In this new construct of masculinity, German men would become military machines endowed with special spiritual depth, imbued with a love for *Heimat* and *Volk* that would be expressed by self-sacrifice and death for the nation.

¹⁶⁹ Joseph Enzensperger, Ein Bergsteigerleben. Alpine Aufsätze und Vorträge, Reisebriefe und Kerguelen-Tagebuch von Josef Enzensperger, ed. Akademischer Alpenverein München, 2nd. ed. (Munich: Alpenfreund-Verlag A.-G., 1924) 116. “Als wir dort eintrafen, war ein großer Teil der bekannten Führerlosen versammelt. In allen Typen – groß und klein, dick und mager, verschlossen und gesprächig, Deutsche, Engländer, Österreicher, Schweizer – waren sie vertreten.”

¹⁷⁰ ZDÖAV (1919): 169. “Wenn wir auch die erste alpine Betätigung der Vertreter beider Nationen nach ihren Beweggründen trennen und sagen können, daß der englische Alpinismus sportlichen Motiven seine Entstehung verdankte, der deutsche dagegen wissenschaftlichem oder rein menschlichem Forscherdrang entsprungen war, jedenfalls haben beide Momente im Verein mit der um diese Zeit beginnenden Organisierung der Bergsteiger zusammengewirkt, der alpinen Bewegung den Antrieb zu jenem Siegeslauf zu geben, der sie Gemeingut aller Kreise und einen Teil unseres Kulturlebens werden ließ.”

NEW MASCULINITY, NEW MOUNTAINEERS

This new masculinity was undoubtedly shaped by the experience of World War I.¹⁷¹ Representations of Victorian masculinity had focused on the male individual and his experience of adventure, while “postwar masculine nationalism ... emphasized the collective, its *future*, and the individual’s place in the functioning and health of the social body of the nation.”¹⁷² The emphasis on masculine self-expression moved away from heroic deeds performed for individual reasons and towards male duty as a necessary element of social organization. As George Mosse noted, masculinity after World War I became central to a number of discourses:

The ideal of masculinity was invoked on all sides as a symbol of personal and national regeneration, but also as basic to the self-definition of modern society. Manliness was supposed to safeguard the existing order against the perils of modernity, but it was also regarded as an indispensable attribute of those who wanted change.¹⁷³

In the specific context of Weimar Germany, this new masculinity found a number of venues for expression. As several scholars have pointed out, paramilitary groups across the political spectrum, such as the *Stahlhelm*, the *Jung Deutscher Orden*, the *Reichsbanner* organizations, the *Freikorps* and the *Rote Front*, provided opportunities for men to demonstrate their masculinity and unleash their aggression in the service of a political movement styled as a national cause. Yet paramilitary street fighting was not the only venue in which men could engage in masculine pursuits. Numerous associations and clubs, dedicated to a staggering variety of competitive sports, provided a social context

¹⁷¹ Jens Schmidt, “Sich hart machen, wenn es gilt.” Männlichkeitskonzeptionen in Illustrierten der Weimarer Republik (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2000) 35.

¹⁷² David James Bielanski, “Front Line Weimar: Paramilitary Mobilization and Masculine Representation in Postwar Germany,” diss., U of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, 2002, 6.

¹⁷³ George L. Mosse, The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity (New York: Oxford UP, 1999) 3.

for the development and display of masculinity; indeed, the 1920s witnessed the birth of sports events as mass spectacles.¹⁷⁴

One of the “perils of modernity” that loomed large in the construction of masculinity in the Weimar Republic was the mass quality of modern culture. While postwar masculine nationalism imagined the male collective as an orderly, disciplined force, the masses were formless and chaotic, threatening to overwhelm the carefully cultivated structure of masculine society. The literary historian Bernd Widdig describes the binary construction of masculinity and the masses as follows:

Bound up in the discourse of mastery, the masses must appear speechless. The masses are spoken about, they are described, defined and classified by observers that view themselves as separate from the masses. The threat, the uncanny nature of the masses is in their tendency to contradict this dictated speechlessness and express themselves in new, often non-verbal forms. In marches, in the assembly of masses of people during a strike or demonstration, the speech of their bodies finds expression.¹⁷⁵

Widdig’s identification of the masculine impulse to impose order on the shapeless, inarticulate masses corresponds with Freud’s psychoanalytic theories regarding the masses. According to Freud, the masses were inconceivable without a leader, a Führer; their existence was predicated on allegiance to some higher power. In a passage that could equally describe a masculine social group or the masses, Freud wrote that “the commander is a father who loves all of his soldiers equally, and that is why they become

¹⁷⁴ Detlev Peukert, The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity, trans. Richard Deveson (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987) 175-176.

¹⁷⁵ Bernd Widdig, Männerbünde und Massen. Zur Krise männlicher Identität in der Literatur der Moderne (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992) 23. “Eingebunden in den Diskurs der Herrschaft, muß die Masse zunächst sprachlos erscheinen. Es wird über sie gesprochen, sie wird beschrieben, definiert und klassifiziert von Beobachtern, die sich als außerhalb der Masse stehend betrachten. Ihre Bedrohung, ihr Unheimliches erhält sie, indem sie sich dieser diktierten Sprachlosigkeit widersetzt und sich in neuen, oft non-verbalen Formen Ausdruck schafft. In Aufmärschen, in der Ansammlung von Menschenmengen während eines Streiks oder einer Demonstration kommt die Sprache ihres Körpers zur Wirkung.”

comrades.”¹⁷⁶ Freud’s choice of a military metaphor to describe the dynamics of mass psychology suggests the hierarchical nature of the relationship between masculinity and the masses: the masses were “below,” subordinate to the ordering principles dispensed on high by a masculine leader. As the following passage from a novel written by a *Freikorps* member indicates, the masses were an object of both fear and contempt:

Shall I tell you what is the scourge of our being as Germans? It is the depth of the tension between the mass and those towering individuals in whom the German essence lives and grows creative – a gulf greater than in any other people that has written its name into the stars. The individual German is sometime ethereal, a true creature of God; but precisely because the German individual towers so high above men of other countries, the German mass is all the more dreadful.¹⁷⁷

The juxtaposition of the masculine leader and the emasculated masses, along with the spatial dynamics of this particular text, clearly positions the masculine individual above the masses. And in the context of mountaineering texts, such spatial relationships become both physical and metaphysical; the mountaineer, perched high upon a dangerous precipice, casts his contemptuous gaze down at the tumultuous masses below.¹⁷⁸

Mountaineering has long been described as the exclusive province of men, and many German mountaineers agreed with the statement that “the history of alpinism is founded on manly deeds.”¹⁷⁹ Some asserted that “mountaineering makes men more masculine,”¹⁸⁰ while others described mountaineering as “the most masculine sport.”¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁶ Sigmund Freud, *Massenpsychologie und Ich-Analyse* (Leipzig: Internationaler Psychoanalytischer Verlag, 1921) 89. Qtd. in Widdig 117. “Der Feldherr ist der Vater, der alle seine Soldaten gleich liebt, und darum sind sie Kameraden untereinander.”

¹⁷⁷ Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, trans. Stephen Conway, vol. 2 (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989) 48.

¹⁷⁸ Such moments are especially prevalent in the *Bergfilm*; in *Stürme auf dem Mont Blanc*, for example, the heroic protagonist looks with both longing and disdain down into the civilization below his weather station.

¹⁷⁹ *MDÖAV* (1925): 80. “...daß die Geschichte der Alpinistik auf Mannestat gegründet ist.”

¹⁸⁰ *MDÖAV* (1903): 107. “Das Bergsteigen macht den Mann männlicher.”

Yet what exactly did German mountaineers mean when they invoked “masculinity”? How are we to understand their articulations of masculine idealism in the social and cultural context of the Weimar Republic?

The masculine virtues of the mountaineer are often described in the same exact terms in several different sources. If a mountaineer “wanted to achieve something important, he must assemble the noblest masculine virtues within himself: courage, fearlessness, cold-bloodedness, endurance, quick and clear powers of perception...”¹⁸² The mountaineer Josef Enzensperger described his fellow elite alpinists as “cold-blooded men of the cliffs,”¹⁸³ men who possessed such qualities as “the courage of decisiveness, the tenacity to remain true to such determinations and cold-bloodedness in the most complicated situations...”¹⁸⁴ The ability to accurately assess a difficult situation accurately and act quickly and resolutely was lionized among elite mountaineers.

The mental fortitude of the mountaineer was constantly tested in the physical rigors of wrestling with the Alps. Enzensperger described how alpine trials furthered the mountaineer’s psychosomatic development:

Those who judge the mountaineer believe that the great ventures in the Alps demand nothing more than the simple exertion of leg and arm muscles, providing no other benefit than increased physical strength; they do not realize, however, what rich spiritual blessings the mountaineer derives from our kind of mountaineering (and only our kind), what we bring from the heights into the

¹⁸¹ MDÖAV (1918): 57. “...der männlichste Sport.”

¹⁸² J. Meurer, Katechismus für Bergsteiger, Gebirgstouristen, Alpenreisende (Leipzig: Weber, 1892) 63. “Der Hochtourist, wenn er tüchtiges leisten will, muß deswegen auch die edelsten Mannestugenden in sich vereinigen: Mut, Unerschrockenheit, Kaltblütigkeit, Ausdauer, schnelles klares Erfassen...”

¹⁸³ Enzensperger 72.

¹⁸⁴ Enzensperger 43. “...die Kühnheit des Entschlusses, die Zähigkeit des Festhaltens an demselben, die Kaltblütigkeit in den verwickeltesten Lagen...”

small-minded world of men – they do not sense how much the old saying mens sana in corpore sano (“a sound mind in a healthy body”) is realized...¹⁸⁵

Enzensperger’s description of the mountaineer descending from the heights suggests not only a physical descent from an alpine peak, but also a metaphorical descent from a higher world. The language of “above” and “below,” quite common in alpine literature, acquires a specific meaning in which the mountaineer, positioned higher than the masses below, becomes an exemplary educator. Enzensperger’s fellow mountaineer, Eugen Guido Lammer, described mountaineering as the best way to promote “health, hardening, proximity to nature, a real rebirth, especially for millions of city people!”¹⁸⁶ Life up above in the Alps became a parallel world to life in the city below, and mountaineering was a way to prepare for the struggles of modern life:

Those who have struggled hard against nature, who have forced nature’s will to their own unbowed will, they will not bow before any adversity in their everyday lives, and such an example works upon the masses in an educating and encouraging way.¹⁸⁷

The mountaineer’s special ability to confront the drudgery of everyday life was to be inculcated in young people as well in order to prepare them for their normal lives:

...the young mountaineer will remain upon the hard-won, bright heights, because they have become dear and essential to him; he feels within himself that a wonderful magical garden blooms there, from which he can draw nobility of soul

¹⁸⁵ Enzensperger 43. “Die den Hochturisten verurteilen, glauben wohl, daß die großen Unternehmungen in den Alpen nichts verlangen als eine bloße Anstrengung der Bein- und Armmuskeln und keinen anderen Nutzen bringen als eine Erhöhung physischer Kraft; sie ahnen aber nicht, welch reichen geistigen Segen der Hochturist gerade durch unsere und nur durch unsere Art des Bergsteigens herabnimmt von den Höhen ins kleinliche Getriebe der Menschen – sie ahnen nicht, wie sehr dadurch der alte Spruch von der mens sana in corpore sano verwirklicht wird,...”

¹⁸⁶ Eugen Guido Lammer, “Alpinismus oder Sport?” Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 18 July 1924: 2.

¹⁸⁷ MDÖAV (1918): 126. “Die hart mit der Natur gekämpft, die ihr den unbeugsamen Eisenwillen aufgezwungen haben, die werden sich auch im Alltagsleben nicht vor jedem Ungemach beugen, und solches Beispiel wirkt auf die große Menge erziehend und aufmunternd.”

and spiritual as well as physical recuperation, which he can bring back to the hard, prosaic and mundane life of the everyday.¹⁸⁸

Coping with the everyday, rendered bearable by the experience and memory of time spent in the mountains, positioned mountaineering as a recuperative activity, a corrective for the challenges of city life.

If mountaineering offered an escape from the city, it also offered a haven from the psychological crush of modern life. The grandeur of the mountains, according to the mountaineer Eugen Guido Lammer, inspired and emancipated the mind:

The narrow cares of the everyday, short-sighted wishes and petty feelings disappear before this boundless world of timeless and magnificent nature, along with all of the self-important vanities of the dwarfish ego; can anyone who has drunk deeply of this spirit in the mountains think and strive purely in terms of sport? No, because the last goal of such thinking and activity remains only a reflection of the weak ego. Enjoy your vacation from yourselves, dear mountaineers!¹⁸⁹

Psychological liberation in the mountains, according to several commentators, constituted one of the most significant motivations for embracing elite mountaineering and all of its dangers.

Most importantly, however, mountaineering functioned as the antidote for the poison of materialism. Although alpine authors never described materialism with anything approaching analytical precision, it is clear that they associated it with consumer culture and capitalism on one hand, and cold rational objectivity and a lack of ideals on

¹⁸⁸ MDÖAV 1924: 187. "...[der junge Bergsteiger] wird auf der gewonnenen, lichten Höhe bleiben, weil sie ihm lieb und unentbehrlich geworden, weil er selbst fühlt, daß ihm da droben ein wundersames Zaubergärtchen blüht, aus dem er Seelenadel und geistige wie körperliche Erholung mit hinab bringt für das harte, prosaische und gleichförmig dahinfließende Alltagsleben."

¹⁸⁹ Eugen Guido Lammer, "Alpinismus oder Sport?" *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 18 July 1924: 2. "Mit den engen Alltagssorgen und kurzsichtigen Wünschen und kleinlichen Gefühlchen versinken auch vor dieser grenzenlosen Welt, dieser überzeitlichen und überragenden Großnatur all die aufgeblasenen Eitelkeiten jenes zwerghaften Ichs; kann ein von diesem Geiste ganz Durchtränkter im Gebirge noch rein sportlich denken und trachten? Nein, denn das letzte Ziel solchen Denkens und Tuns bleibt ja doch immer das dünne Ich mit seiner Selbstspiegelung. Gönnst euch Ferien vom Ich, liebe Bergwanderer!"

the other. Mountaineering was described as “the stirrings of a romantic spirit” that had become “the negator of materialism,” preaching that “there are ideal values that exist apart from material goods, and these are not for sale.”¹⁹⁰ The act of climbing a mountain took on connotations of transcendence, as one author claimed that “the overcoming of gravity is the struggle against materialism and the expression of our soul.”¹⁹¹ Entering the sacred space of the mountains offered an opportunity for healing the ravages of a materialistic world:

The longing for eternal harmony and its manifestation in nature has always driven us into field and forest, onto rocks and cliffs. Yet nature alone cannot heal the sick soul, since nature is also material; and the retreat into the everyday allows the old sickness to revive – but nature can pave the way for healing, until a new, healthy way of thinking has arisen from a new, healthy, romantic spirit.¹⁹²

Yet this “new, healthy, romantic spirit” was besieged on all sides by the relentless acceleration of the pace of life, the regulation of time into work, play and sleep, the increasingly aggressive audiovisual assault of life in the street.

The sensual overload of modern life led many mountaineers to think of alpinism as a treatment for nervous conditions. In many ways, mountaineers were participating in the discourse of the life reform movement that had been founded in the Wilhelmine Empire and had continued to grow throughout the Weimar Republic. The life reform movement included such disparate practices as vegetarianism, nudism, therapeutic baths, psychotherapy, natural therapy and exercise. Much like the mountaineers, the supporters

¹⁹⁰ “Die Romantik und das Wandern” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 29 August 1924: 3.

¹⁹¹ “Sursum Corda!” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 26 February 1926: 1.

¹⁹² “Die Romantik und das Wandern,” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 29 Aug 1924: 3. “Die Sehnsucht nach der ewigen Harmonie und ihrem Wirken in der Natur ist es, die uns immer wieder hinaustreibt in Feld und Wald, auf Fels und Firn. Heilen kann die Natur die kranke Seele zwar nicht; sie ist selbst nur Materie – und die Rückkehr ins Alltagsleben läßt die alte Krankheit neu aufleben – aber anbahnen kann sie die Heilung, bis aus neuem, gesundem, romantischem Geist ein neues gesundes Denken erstanden ist.”

of the life reform movement “believed that modern civilization, urbanization, and industrialization had alienated human beings from their “natural” living conditions, leading them down a path of progressive degeneration...”¹⁹³ To treat the mind and body damaged by modernity, the life reform movement explored therapies that placed the human being in its “natural environment,” free from the stress, noise and pollution of the urban environment; removal from the source of contamination would heal and strengthen the organism, making it more able to withstand hyper-stimulated modern life.

Before World War I, the psychological diagnosis of mental conditions brought on by over-stimulation, such as hysteria and neurasthenia, were limited almost exclusively to women. As the historian and literary critic Elaine Showalter has pointed out, these psychological afflictions were identified as feminine diseases for a number of reasons. First, early physicians believed that women suffered from these conditions because they had departed from their “natural” roles: “at the same time that new opportunities for self-cultivation and self-fulfillment in education and work were offered to women, doctors warned them that pursuit of such opportunities would lead to sickness, sterility, and race suicide.”¹⁹⁴ Second, as the cultural historian Anson Rabinbach has pointed out in his study of power and fatigue, women were thought to have significantly lower reserves of energy than their male counterparts; hence, early physicians believed that the increasing tempo and stress of modern life affected women more severely than men.¹⁹⁵ Hysteria was first diagnosed in men after World War I, when veterans presented symptoms of hysteria

¹⁹³ Michael Hau, The Cult of Health and Beauty in Germany, 1890-1930 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003) 1.

¹⁹⁴ Elaine Showalter, The Female Malady. Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980 (New York: Pantheon Books, 1985) 121.

¹⁹⁵ Anson Rabinbach, The Human Motor: Energy, Fatigue, and the Origins of Modernity (New York: Basic Books, 1990).

– such as depression, insomnia, seizures, sensations of choking or panic attacks – that had formerly been identified as exclusively female maladies. Nervous conditions, then, had a distinctly feminine character, and masculine mountaineers wanted to do their best to avoid suffering the same conditions as their female counterparts.

For mountaineers, the Alps were the natural environment best suited for restoring the nervous system. The late nineteenth-century mountaineer Josef Meurer prescribed a specific formula for the treatment of nervous constitutions; the worse the affliction, the higher the altitude required to treat the condition:

The main evil of the present, caused by the exhausting speed of activity in every endeavor, surfaces in one person lightly, in another somewhat worse, and in others it is a full-blown affliction, a highly advanced disruption of the nervous system. Experience teaches us that there is no better remedy for this, the greatest evil confronting this generation, than a respite at high altitude, time spent in the Alps, and advanced nervous conditions should be treated in the high Alps.¹⁹⁶

Another mountaineer described the causes of this “nervousness” in greater detail, extrapolating the diagnosis of the individual to a critique of modern society as a whole:

Mountaineering was in a sense an imperative of our age, a reaction against the nervousness of modern life, with its increasing compartmentalization of professional life and spirit-killing specialization, against overrefinement and empty rhetoric, a cry for ideal, strong and courageous beliefs.¹⁹⁷

Throughout discussions of tremulous or shattered nerves, mountaineers presented the Alps as a curative landscape and mountaineering as a therapeutic activity. Removed from

¹⁹⁶ Meurer 14. “Das Hauptübel der Gegenwart, hervorgerufen durch die aufreibende, hastende Thätigkeit in allen Erwerbszweigen, äußert sich in einer bei dem Einen leicht, bei dem Anderen schon schwerer, bei dem Dritten hochgradig auftretenden Affektion, im weitem Verlauf Zerrüttung des Nervensystems. Gegen dieses große Übel der heutigen Generation nun giebt es, so lehrte die Erfahrung, kein besseres Heilmittel, als ein Aufenthalt in hoher Luft, also ein Verweilen in den Alpenländern, und bei hochgradigeren Nervenleiden sogar in den Hochalpen.”

¹⁹⁷ Theodor Wundt, “Die Bedeutung des Alpinismus” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 9 November 1923: 3. “[Alpinismus] war in gewissem Sinne eine Notwendigkeit unserer Zeit, als eine Reaktion gegen die Nervosität des modernen Lebens mit seiner mehr und mehr ins einzelne gehenden Zergliederung des Berufslebens und seiner geisttötenden Spezialisierung, gegen Ueberkultur und Phrasentum, ein Schrei nach idealen, kräftigen und mutigen Anschauungen.”

the overwhelming stimuli of the city and modern civilization, mountaineers were the avatars of a healthy alternative to enervating modern life:

In the wild haste of our times, in the progressive mechanization of the world and of humanity, in the noise of an overgrown civilization, in the nerve-shattering rat race, in the oppressive atmosphere of endless political bickering, in the thousand anesthetics and forgetful ecstasies of living it up, in the flood of slogans and party platforms, we need an island, a quiet place, where all of this does not exist – and that place today is in the heart of over-civilized Europe – *the Alps*.¹⁹⁸

Presented as the ideal landscape, the Alps became civilization's negative mirror image, the opposite of the city, a retreat from the industrialized tempo and mechanization of everyday life.

Yet what exactly was it about mountaineering that facilitated the healing process? According to the mountaineer Eugen Guido Lammer, it was not only the escape from the city, but the search for the “right” kind of stimulation:

There is no doubt: whenever we see that the number of the most dangerous climbs increases dramatically from year to year, there is a very strong reason – more and more people are discovering the intoxicating voluptuousness of danger. People call this sick, mad and psychopathic. But that doesn't change the fact that a large portion of our generation suffers from highly irritated nervous systems, and that these people turn to the strongest toxic substances available.¹⁹⁹

According to Lammer, mountaineering in the Alps was the natural substitute for taking drugs and consuming alcohol. The thrill of danger experienced on a vertiginous, difficult

¹⁹⁸ “Der Alpenverein in Wien,” *Der Bergsteiger* 21 May 1927: 129. “In der wilden Hast unserer Zeit, in der fortschreitenden Mechanisierung der Welt und der Menschen, in dem Lärm übermäßig angewachsener Zivilisation, in der nervenzermürenden Hetzjagd modernen Wirtschaftslebens, in der Stickluft endlosen Parteigezänkes, in den tausend Betäubungen und Vergessenheitsräuschen des Auslebens, in der Flut der Schlagworte, Phrasen und Programme tun uns Inseln not, stilles Land, wo all dies nicht ist – und das sind heute im Herzen des überzivilisierten Europas – *die Alpen*.”

¹⁹⁹ Eugen Guido Lammer, *Jungborn. Bergfahrten und Höhengedanken eines einsamen Pfadsuchers* (Munich: R. Rother, 1923) 213. “Es ist kein Zweifel: Wenn wir die Zahl gerade der gefährlichsten Turen von Jahr zu Jahr reißend zunehmen sehen, so liegt ein starker Grund darin, daß immer mehr Menschen an ihren eigenen Nerven die Erfahrung machen, welch berausende Wollust in der Gefahr liegt. Man schildert dies krankhaft, toll und psychopathisch. Damit wird aber die Tatsache nicht aus der Welt geschafft, daß bei einem großen Teil unserer Generation das Nervensystem auf höchste gereizt ist, und daß diese Menschen zu den stärksten toxischen Mitteln greifen.”

climb produced a sensation similar to the ecstasies of the drug high; describing a particularly frightening climb, Lammer wrote that “such hours ... are sweeter than morphium for exhausted (*kultur müde*) nerves.”²⁰⁰ Lammer described the titillation of danger’s proximity on one climb as “exciting and always nerve-wracking ... sometimes more than I liked.”²⁰¹ The adrenaline-laced experience of mountaineering offered a salve, simultaneously restoring a sense of animation to deadened nerves and strengthening the nervous system to endure modern life.

Pronouncements about the curative function of the Alps and mountaineering suggest that mountaineers believed that they were besieged by opponents and foes at every turn. Mountaineers often described themselves and their craft as victims of incomprehensible persecution. Complaining about the attentions that the press lavished on mountaineering accidents, Eugen Guido Lammer wrote that

Mountaineering is exactly as pointless or useful as ice skating, swimming or hunting; and we know for a fact that innumerable people drown while swimming or ice skating, or are wounded while on the hunt, just as the mountains claim a number of victims every year. So then why doesn’t the press arrive at the same conclusion? Isn’t this a failure of logic? Why do the public and the press only get excited about accidents in the mountains? Because these incidents usually involve names out of “society,” and also because alpine catastrophes play out dramatically and attract sensational commentary.²⁰²

Lammer’s understanding of the inherently dramatic quality of mountaineering accidents did not prevent others from harboring more caustic feelings about the press and the

²⁰⁰ Lammer, *Jungborn* 73. “Derartige Stunden ... sie sind für kultur müde Nerven süßer als Morphium.”

²⁰¹ Lammer, *Jungborn* 72.

²⁰² Lammer, *Jungborn* 68. “Das Bergsteigen ist genau so zwecklos oder nützlich wie das Eislaufen, Schwimmen, Jagen; wir wissen schon heute ebenso sicher, daß noch unzählige Menschen beim Schwimmen und Eislaufen ertrinken, auf der Jagd Wunden erhalten werden, wie daß die Berge jährlich eine Zahl von Opfern behalten werden. Warum also die ungleiche Schlußfolgerung? Liegt hierin nicht ein logischer Fehler? Warum erregt sich die Öffentlichkeit und die Presse immer nur bei Bergunfällen? Weil diese zumeist Namen aus der ‘Gesellschaft’ betreffen, und dann, weil die Alpenkatastrophe immer wie ein Drama wirkt und daher zur sensationellen Verwertung lockt.”

public. Many mountaineers felt that the public was terribly misinformed about the true nature of mountaineering.

The mountaineer can never expect to find understanding and recognition of his high goals among the great masses. The crass incomprehension in non-mountaineering circles, every distortion in the daily paper about accidents and similar affairs, leaves almost no hope that we will be able to explain mountaineering.²⁰³

The belief that the public could not, or would not, understand the meaning of mountaineering resulted in an increasingly insular and exclusive attitude among alpinists, even within the ranks of the Alpenverein. At a talk delivered to the Alpenverein section in Allgäu, Enzensperger refused to even describe the landscape of a recent climb, informing the audience that they were not to “ask [him] about one of those alpine descriptions, which are all the same anyway.”²⁰⁴ Following the advice of a British alpinist who once asserted that “if we have learned anything in the Alps, it is to avoid the foolish attempt to describe an alpine view.” Agreeing with his British colleague, Enzensperger went on to describe in sarcastic terms the typical effusions over the alpine landscape:

Finally, it all comes down to the same thing in such descriptions: before us, behind us, to our right and left, there are mountains; obligatory phrases about green meadows and dark forests, of grazing cows seen far below, bleating goats; and if it really gets going, then throw in a couple of rams to populate the landscape, and the old dependable recipe for the description of an alpine view is complete.²⁰⁵

²⁰³ MDÖAV (1923): 122. “Wohl kann der Hochturist niemals darauf rechnen, bei dem großen Haufen Verständnis und Anerkennung seiner Ziele zu finden. Die krasse Verständnislosigkeit in nichtalpinen Kreisen, jede Verzerrung in Tageszeitungen bei Unfällen und ähnlichen Gelegenheiten lassen eine Aufklärungsarbeit fast aussichtslos erscheinen.”

²⁰⁴ Enzensperger 74.

²⁰⁵ Enzensperger 74. “Schließlich kommt es ja bei solchen Schilderungen immer aufs gleiche hinaus: Vorne, hinten, rechts und links Berge, die obligaten Phrasen von grünen Matten und dunklen Wäldern, von weidenden Kühen, die man tief unten erblickt, und meckernden Ziegen; wenn es hoch hergeht, so nehmen sie noch ein paar Gemsen dazu, die die Landschaft bevölkern, und das unfehlbar wirkende Rezept zu der Schilderung einer Aussicht ist fertig.”

Enzensperger not only ridiculed the conventions of alpine description, but also how the lay public vicariously experienced the Alps.²⁰⁶ Enzensperger urged mountaineers to refrain from attempting to describe the indescribable; instead, the uninitiated would have to travel to the Alps themselves and learn to articulate their own experiences.

WOMEN AND MOUNTAINEERING

While the men of the Alpenverein described tourists in the terms of feminized masses, they also exhibited a peculiar ambivalence towards female mountaineers. Although the Alpenverein had been formally open to women since its inception, shifting gender roles in public life, mass media and the workplace during the Weimar Republic posed significant new challenges to long-held notions of masculinity and femininity. As a result of these challenges, male mountaineers increasingly subjected women to the same critiques levied against the masses: women were too materialist, superficial and weak for the alpine experience.

Representations of women in the context of mountaineering often emphasized their inferiority and subordination to men in a number of ways.²⁰⁷ In a cartoon published in 1924, a male mountaineer strains against a rope as he drags a woman up the mountain.²⁰⁸ In another illustration, a female hiker tells her male companion that the “the best part of mountaineering is heading home, because one finally knows that the whole

²⁰⁶ Ernst Bloch’s essay, “Alpen ohne Photographie,” is interesting in this regard; Bloch asked what our reaction might be if we were to see the Matterhorn for the first time without having seen its likeness on a postcard. Like Bloch, Enzensperger argues here for immediate, rather than mediated, experience. Ernst Bloch, “Alpen ohne Photographie (1930)” *Literarische Aufsätze* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1965).

²⁰⁷ This discussion focuses on the representations of women in the alpine press. For a discussion of female self-representation, see Dagmar Günther, *Alpine Quergänge. Kulturgeschichte des bürgerlichen Alpinismus (1870-1930)* (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1998) 277-334.

²⁰⁸ “Sie am Seil,” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 9 May 1924: 3.

thing is over.”²⁰⁹ And a photograph that depicted a woman going through her backpack by an alpine lake, with the iconic Matterhorn in the background, was accompanied by the caption, “the contents of her backpack are clearly more important to her than the mountain of mountains.”²¹⁰ Such representations of female mountaineers emphasized their inferiority vis-a-vis their male counterparts.

By representing female mountaineers as second-rate companions, male mountaineers sought, at least rhetorically, to exclude women from the alpine experience. In many ways, male attitudes toward female mountaineers corresponded to other debates about the new roles assumed by women in the Weimar Republic. As traditional gender roles began to give way under the pressure of political, social and labor developments, women gained significantly more mobility, visibility and independence. This triggered a crisis in male-female relationships, creating anxieties about how men and women were to relate to one another. Among mountaineers, this anxiety was evident in discussions about whether a woman could ever replace a man as a *Bergkamerad* (mountain comrade) or *Tourengefährtin* (touring partner). Articles addressing this theme were published often in the alpine press, from both male and female perspectives. Yet the editorial boards of these publications often prefaced women’s essays with an invitation to their readers to send in their thoughts about gender relations, thereby signaling the distance male editors wished to put between themselves and their female authors.²¹¹

Women certainly visited the Alps in much larger numbers during the Weimar Republic, as numerous advertisements, illustrations and cartoons representing women

²⁰⁹ “Die Tourengefährtin,” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 30 July 1926: 3.

²¹⁰ Bernhard Alter, “‘Sie’ und die Berge,” *Der Bergsteiger* (1931-1932): 353.

²¹¹ Cyrill Herbeck, “Die Frau als Bergkamerad,” *Der Bergsteiger* (1928): 66.

suggest.²¹² In the pages of the Alpenverein's monthly *Mitteilungen*, advertisements depicting men and women together in the mountains appeared with increasing frequency throughout the 1920s. This was also the case throughout the alpine press; in 1927, for example, an advertisement for a mountaineering equipment manufacturer showed a man, standing with a climbing rope in his hand, looking down at his female companion, who is lacing up her hiking boots.²¹³ While one could argue that the man's expression hints at impatience or even exasperation, the illustration is also useful as evidence of the presence of women who had the proper equipment and skills to accompany male mountaineers in the Alps.

Although women proved themselves to be talented climbers in the 1920s, men consistently questioned their abilities in the alpine press.²¹⁴ Yet while male mountaineers were expressing their own anxieties about their relationship to the opposite sex, they were also carving out an exclusive domain where they could preserve traditional forms of masculinity. If the Alps were to be a site for the inculcation of traditional masculine values, then female mountaineers could pose a threat to the sanctity of these masculine ideals. The exclusion of female mountaineers, as well as the feminized masses, was one way to attempt to gain control of alpine space and fashion it into a masculine space for male mountaineers.

²¹² Alpine ski resorts became the site of romance for several visitors, where eligible bachelors and bachelorettes could meet people from their own social strata. See Hansen 244-248.

²¹³ Advertisement for Mizzi Langer-Kauba Bergsteiger-Ausrüstung, *Der Bergsteiger* (1928): 65.

²¹⁴ For more information on the accomplishments of female climbers before 1945, see the brief summary in Karl Ziak, *Der Mensch und die Berge. Eine Weltgeschichte des Alpinismus* (Salzburg: Verlag Das Bergland-Buch, 1983) 90-96.

THE MOUNTAINEERS AND THE MASSES

The formation of an elite corps of mountaineers involved not only the development of a new set of masculine characteristics that were exclusive to the new mountaineer, but also the proscription of the masses. Mountaineers described the masses in terms of an invading swarm, a flood, a seething mass of indeterminate bodies; as the mountaineer Josef Enzensperger wrote, “it is crawling with tourists up there,” “swarms of tourists.”²¹⁵ Imagining a deadly fall, mountaineer Eugen Guido Lammer described the fatal slip, followed by “the masses spilling over me without mercy.”²¹⁶ Mass tourism both threatened to corrupt the experience of mountaineering and to overwhelm the mountaineer psychologically.

In his psychoanalytic investigation of the biographical and fictional oeuvre produced by the *Freikorps*, the paramilitary squads that terrorized the Weimar Republic, the cultural historian Klaus Theweleit describes how different substances, such as fluids and solids, took on gendered meanings in novels of the interwar period. Theweleit asserts that women have long been associated with flowing substances,²¹⁷ and that the same fluid imagery can be found at work in representations of masses of human beings.²¹⁸ The implications of Theweleit’s argument point to an important juxtaposition in the specific context of mountaineers’ relationships to the masses. Unlike the rapidly shifting, amorphous nature of popular culture in the modern era, mountaineers hewed to timeless ideals, which they pursued among the immortal rock of the mountains, a never-changing

²¹⁵ Enzensperger 57.

²¹⁶ Lammer, *Jungborn* 73.

²¹⁷ Klaus Theweleit, *Male Fantasies*, trans. Stephen Conway, 2 vols., vol. 1 (Minnesota: U of Minnesota P, 1987) 272-288.

²¹⁸ Theweleit, vol. 2, 229-248. Theweleit specifically examines the “Red Flood,” the revolutionary mass movement.

landscape. The mountaineer's masculinity was reflected in the steadfast hardness of the mountains, in stark contrast to the "softness" of the masses of tourists. As we shall see, the elite mountaineer perceived the masses as the feminized rabble below, harboring "a simultaneous contempt for the masses; while he addresses himself to them, he feels himself at the same time to be raised above them, one of an elite standing against the lowly "man-of-the-masses.""²¹⁹

Several illustrations from the alpine press of the 1920s suggest the suffocating threat posed by the arrival of the masses in the mountains, described by Lammer as "the unhealthy overcrowding of the Alps."²²⁰ One illustration, "Sunday Morning at the South Train Station," shows a train station full of people carrying their skis to catch the train up to the mountains.²²¹ Tourists clamber indiscriminately over the engine and the passenger cars, much as they will desultorily roam through the Alps upon their arrival at their destination. A poem printed beneath the drawing tells how the first report of snow unleashes a stream of couples who go to the mountains for "sport – and other things," a nod towards the masses' uncontrollable sexual urges. Another illustration, "The Alpine Express," depicts a train station bursting at the seams with tourists carrying their skis toward the platform.²²² Unloaded at their destination, the masses then proceeded to ruin the alpine experience for the serious mountaineer. One cartoon, "Lonely Peak," shows a mountaineer arriving at the top of a vertical climb, only to be greeted by a group of five men smoking pipes, one of them gesticulating that there is no room left for the late

²¹⁹ Theweleit, vol. 2, 3.

²²⁰ Lammer, Jungborn 259.

²²¹ "Sonntagmorgen vor dem Südbahnhof," Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 21 December 1923: 1.

²²² "Der alpine Sonderzug," Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 10 April 1925: 1.

arrival.²²³ Another illustration, drawn as if the reader were looking through binoculars, shows four tourists, two fat men and two fat women, struggling clumsily across an alpine traverse.²²⁴ And when the masses of tourists departed, they left vandalism and garbage in their wake; a cartoon entitled “The Explorers” shows two young men attempting to find a route up a sheer cliff that is covered in graffiti and littered with trash.²²⁵

Visual representations of the masses and their deleterious effects on the mountains were reinforced in the articles of the alpine press and in books written by mountaineers. The threatening character of the masses could take on nuances of class struggle, as the following excerpt from an article on the mass character of tourism makes clear:

The opposition to any further construction in the Alps (*Erschließungspläne*) comes from a completely different background: this opposition is not directed so much at huts and hiking paths as it is against the mass character of the tourist movement. It is not so much the quantitative growth in the number of tourists ... as it is the reality of the invasion of new social classes into the ranks of mountaineering. While in the last decades of the nineteenth century the middle classes were the fastest growing group in mountaineering, the first decades of this century have brought completely new classes to the mountains: the capitalist bourgeoisie and the working class.²²⁶

²²³ “Einsame Zinne,” Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 13 June 1924: 3.

²²⁴ “Fernglasblick auf den Bismarck-Stieg!” Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 31 August 1923: 4.

²²⁵ “Die Entdecker,” Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 14 September 1923: 3.

²²⁶ Albert Lauterbach, “‘Übererschließung’ und Massenbewegung,” Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 24 September 1926: 1. “Die Feindschaft gegen alle weiteren Erschließungspläne hat vielmehr einen ganz anderen Hintergrund: sie richtet sich nicht so sehr gegen die Schutzhütten und Weganlagen, als gegen den zunehmenden Massencharakter der touristischen Bewegung. Hierbei ist es weniger das quantitative Wachstum, das die bisherigen Träger des alpinen Gedankens zum Widerstand reizt, als in Wirklichkeit das Eindringen ganz neuer sozialer Schichten in die Touristik. Während in den letzten Jahrzehnten des vergangenen Jahrhunderts hauptsächlich die fortschreitende Gewinnung des Mittelstandes das zahlenmäßige Wachstum der Bewegung ausmachte, sind es in den ersten Jahrzehnten dieses Jahrhunderts zum Teil ganz neue Schichten, die dies bewirken: das kapitalistische Bürgertum und die Arbeiterschaft.”

The arrival of these new classes had created chaos within the culture of mountaineering, leading “the great alpine clubs to differentiate themselves from one another and to build new internal cliques.”²²⁷ To defend the sanctity of their mountaineering culture, alpinists were creating their own enclaves to sustain their own vision of elite mountaineering.

HEROISM, BODIES, SACRIFICE

Another way that mountaineers sought to distinguish themselves from the lowly masses was through the cultivation of their bodies. Always careful to link physical performance with mental attributes, mountaineers nonetheless focused a great deal of attention on strengthening and hardening their bodies for the rigors of mountaineering. In this regard, the body culture of mountaineering was practiced within the framework of Weimar era physical culture (*Körperkultur*), which emphasized “the holistic development of body and mind.”²²⁸ Mountaineers promoted a culture that paid equal attention to the fortitude of the mind and the strength of the body.

The imagery of the body found in mountaineering texts conforms to an astonishing degree with the narrative conventions of the military novels of Ernst Jünger. Jünger, who fought in both World Wars and managed to live to the ripe old age of 103, wrote his most famous work, the bestselling war memoir, *In Stahlgewittern* (*Storm of Steel*), in 1920. Throughout his war writings, Jünger glorifies the masculine body, bathed in the steel baths of World War I, as a superior product born of the crucible of battle:

This was a whole new race, energy incarnate, charged with supreme energy. Supple bodies, lean and sinewy, striking features, stone eyes petrified in a thousand terrors beneath their helmets. These were conquerors, men of steel tuned to the most grisly battle. Sweeping across a splintered landscape, they heralded the final triumph of all imagined horror. Unimaginable energies were released as

²²⁷ Lauterbach 1.

²²⁸ Hau 177.

these brave troops broke out to regain lost outposts where pale figures gaped at them with madness in their eyes. Jugglers of death, masters of explosive and flame, glorious predators, they sprang easily through the trenches. In the moment of encounter, they encapsulated the spirit of battle as no other human beings could. Theirs was the keenest assembly of bodies, intelligence, will and sensation.²²⁹

Jünger imagines the apotheosis of the soldier's body as the reification of battle, a "man of steel" that moves powerfully through the desolate wasteland of war. In Jünger's works, the terrors and trials of war become a training ground for the man of the future:

As I watch [the soldiers] noiselessly slicing alleyways into barbed wire digging steps to storm outward, synchronizing luminous watches, finding the North by the stars, the recognition flashes: this is the new man. A whole new race, intelligent, strong, men of will. Tomorrow, the phenomenon now manifesting itself in battle will be the axis around which life whirls ever faster. A thousand sweeping deeds will arch across their great cities as they stride down asphalt streets, supple predators straining with energy. They will be architects building on the ruined foundations of the world.²³⁰

The "new man," according to Jünger, is recognizable by his "stone eyes," "intelligence," strength and will, psychologically encapsulated in a "machinelike periphery."²³¹ The rigors of the war experience prepare him to become the leader of the next generation.

Mountaineers also resorted to the imagery of the steeled body to describe their own masculinity. The mountaineer Paul Güssfeldt wrote that, "with clear reason, elevated hearts and a body steeled by alpine work, we will achieve our goal."²³² Another mountaineer described how "the accomplishments of the past weeks had steeled our muscles..."²³³ Mountaineering, like World War I, became a factory for the new man:

²²⁹ Qtd. in Theweleit, vol. 2, 159. The excerpt is from Jünger's Kampf als inneres Erlebnis (1922).

²³⁰ Qtd. in Theweleit, vol. 2, 161-162.

²³¹ Theweleit, vol. 2, 162.

²³² ZDÖAV (1881): 92.

²³³ MDÖAV (1914): 84.

The task, to draw from every class of the German *Volk* steel-hard German men, young Siegfrieds, forged in the fires of a burning love for the crown jewel of their Fatherland, the German Alps, where they have learned how to fight and suppress the base instincts that exist in all of us, only to fear God and nothing else in this world, courage, to steel the will and the body, to honor breeding and tradition tirelessly, all of this, to hate vanity and selfishness above all, and to be prepared to fulfill their duty: to serve the Fatherland and to die for it.²³⁴

The hardened body of the mountaineer, like that of the soldier, became the embodiment of national values that came to dominate representations of the mountaineer during the 1920s.

As the military rhetoric of the alpine press became ever more strident, combative and nationalistic, the body's mortality increasingly became an object of fascination within the mountaineering press. In the pages of the Alpenverein's publications, mountaineering fatalities became occasions for the celebration of timeless values such as heroism and sacrifice for the nation. Mountaineers did not die in accidents; they had fallen in battle against the mountains, where "death reaped rich harvests."²³⁵ Mountaineers were to risk it all in their battle against the elements, and their deaths would be considered heroic sacrifices.

The risk of severe injury and death was what gave mountaineering its intoxicating frisson. Elite mountaineering was based on the ideal of an unmediated encounter between man and mountain, without any artificial aids, and without the benefit of a guide. The mountaineer Paul Preuß, in his advocacy for free climbing, a style of mountaineering that

²³⁴ MDÖAV (1924): 211. "Die Aufgabe, aus allen Schichten des deutschen Volkes stahlharte deutsche Kerle, Siegfriednaturen heranzuziehen, die in dem Feuer glühender Liebe zum Kronjuwel ihres Vaterlandes, der deutschen Bergwelt, geläutert und geschmiedet, die in jedem Menschen vorhandenen schlimmen Eigenschaften des eigenen Ich unterkriegen lernen, nur Gott und sonst nichts auf der Welt fürchten, Mut, Willen und Körper stählen, Zucht und Sitte ehren, das Gemeine, vor allem die Selbstsucht hassen und die Pflicht, dem Vaterland zu dienen und ihm sich zu opfern, restlos zu erfüllen bereit und imstande sind."

²³⁵ MDÖAV (1928): 165.

involved scaling incredibly difficult mountain walls without the security of a climbing rope, described the electric charge generated by the brush with death:

The piton (climbing anchor) should not be used to conquer mountains. I don't want to say the last word about the love of danger, which to a certain degree is indispensable for we modern mountaineers. It strikes me, though, that the thought, "if you fall, three meters of rope will catch you," has less ethical value than the feeling, "one fall and you are dead." If someone wants to do gymnastics in absolute safety on vertical walls, either secured by three ropes or a rescue net below them, then they should stay at home and test their dexterity in a gymnastics hall.²³⁶

Preuß sought to raise the stakes of mountaineering by introducing a "pure" alpine climbing style, uncluttered by equipment, which fully embraced danger as an instructive component of the alpine experience. Exploring the unknown and testing his boundaries, Preuß wrote, helped the mountaineer to overcome his fears and, ironically, increase his lust for life:

And every uncertainty gave us pleasure. I have often read of the worries of the mountaineer who is about to be the first to climb a mountain, of the fear that they felt at the simple thought, "I might not make it," of the fear and trembling before the ascent had even begun, as if he were already defeated! I have to admit: perhaps I have missed some beautiful feeling, some valuable insight into myself, but I have never felt fear or worry while mountaineering, only curiosity and eager anticipation, accompanied me on the trail...²³⁷

²³⁶ Reinhold Messner, ed. *Freiklettern mit Paul Preuß* (Munich: BLV Verlag, 1986) 33. "Auch der Mauerhaken ist ein Notbehelf; ein Mittel, Berge zu bezwingen, darf er nicht sein. Ich will der Liebe zur Gefahr, die bei uns modernen Bergsteigern bis zu einem gewissen Grade unbedingt vorhanden ist, nicht das Wort reden. Mir kommt aber doch vor, daß der Gedanke: 'wenn du fällst, hängst du drei Meter am Seil' geringeren ethischen Wert hat, als das Gefühl: 'ein Sturz und du bist tot.' Wenn man an steilen Wänden mit absoluter Sicherheit nur turnen will, etwa an dreifachen Seilen oder aber einem aufgespannten Sprungtuch, dann soll man doch lieber zu Hause bleiben und seine Geschicklichkeit im Turnverein erproben."

²³⁷ Messner 86. "Und jene Ungewißheit bereitete uns auf unserem heutigen Wege helle Freude. Ich habe oft von den Sorgen der Erstersteiger gelesen, von der Angst, die sie empfanden bei dem bloßen Gedanken, 'es könnte nicht gehen,' von dem Zittern vor dem Abstieg als Besiegte! Doch ich muß gestehen: Vielleicht ist mir dadurch manch schönes Gefühl, manch wertvoller Einblick in das eigene Ich verlorengegangen – doch Angst oder Sorgen habe ich dabei nie empfunden, nur Interesse, Spannung sind es, die mich auf neuen Wegen begleiten..."

Preuß died in October 1913, falling one thousand feet from the Mandlwand in Austria, but his promotion of extreme mountaineering, his concept of testing one's physical and mental strengths against the impassive mountains, had caught on among elite mountaineers.

Several mountaineers described death in the mountains as a moment of transfiguration in which the spirit is emancipated from the proverbial mortal coil and ascends to the highest mountain peaks, carrying on the work of the shattered body²³⁸: “if we fall, then the lesser elements of our being are smashed to pieces, while the greater part of us continues on upon the voluntarily trodden path, up to the heights, beyond the mountain peak.”²³⁹ In the alpine “world of death ... abandoned by all living things,” where “either doubt or awe must permeate the heart,”²⁴⁰ death is a terrifying yet enticing companion:

I give thanks that I have been allowed to taste the sweetest of all sweet pleasures that life has to offer: to sip from the chalice of death! Because the real danger of death is a gift from the gods, no-one can pluck this fruit themselves – least of all the suicide: he wants peace and a quick end; but we, who affirm this delicious life, we seek the storm, the wave; we want to conquer death.²⁴¹

Death in the mountains was described as a moment of transition, not only from this world to the next, but from the misery of earthly existence to the sunny enlightenment: “the

²³⁸ In Arnold Fanck's mountain film *Der heilige Berg*, the main protagonist, played by Luis Trenker, experiences just such a moment of illumination shortly before falling to his death; in his hallucination, he is reunited with his lover in a cathedral of ice. See chapter seven.

²³⁹ MDÖAV (1931): 53. “Fallen wir, so zerschmettert nur das Niedere unseres Wesens, während unser Besseres den freiwillig angetretenen Weg zur Höhe, weit höher empor, über den Gipfel hinaus, fortsetzt.”

²⁴⁰ Enzensperger 34.

²⁴¹ Lammer, *Jungborn* 97. “Dank, daß ihr mich den süßesten von allen süßen Genüßen, die das Leben bietet, habt schlürfen lassen: vom Becher des Todes genippt zu haben! Denn die wahre Todesgefahr ist ein Göttergeschenk, selber pflücken kann sie niemand – am wenigsten der Selbstmörder: der will die Ruhe, das schnelle Ende; wir aber, die wir dem wonnigen Leben entgegenjodeln, wir begehren den Sturm, die Woge; wir wollen den Tod besiegen.”

earthly preface to perfect happiness can only be accomplished through death, just as the blessedness of the beyond can only be won through death.”²⁴² Such meditations on the virtues of death showed, according to one mountaineer, “that there are still great and beautiful things in this life, worth striving for but also dangerous, that can only be reached through the risking of one’s life.”²⁴³ Proximity to death and danger “awaken the most terrific insights into the soul. Alpinism ... is only the visible manifestation of deeper motives.”²⁴⁴

These “deeper motives” were correlated with the idea that mountaineers were performing heroic deeds in the mountains. Mountaineering took on the triumphal qualities of epic adventure, as mountaineers represented their feats as a quixotic battle against the overpowering elements of nature: “our goal and our highest joy is to emerge victorious in our struggle against the seemingly overpowering forces of nature ... where the elements, multiplied a hundred-fold, drive forward against the seemingly powerless man.”²⁴⁵ The heroic posture of the mountaineer, who remained focused and collected in the face of adversity, offered a powerful metaphor for the new man of the German nation, and such imagery was applied to national contexts, as this address to the “alpine youth” testifies:

Our *Volk* was rich, but its entire life has descended into materialism; a lower ethos pushed itself into the everyday, and we spiritual people turned away with bitterness from this reality with its senseless goals, to the liberating loneliness of

²⁴² MDÖAV (1931): 51. “...daß die irdische Vorstufe der wunschlosen Glückseligkeit nur hart am Tode vorbei zu erreichen ist, so wie die Seligkeit des Jenseits nur durch den Tod hindurch sich gewinnen läßt.”

²⁴³ Deutscher und Österreichischer Alpenverein, Alpines Handbuch, 2 vols., vol. 2, (Munich: 1931) 28.

²⁴⁴ MDÖAV (1927): 180.

²⁴⁵ Enzensperger 42. “Unser Zweck und unsere höchste Freude ist es, im Ringen gegen die scheinbar übermächtigen Gewalten der Natur zu siegen ... wo die Elemente hundertfach verstärkt gegen den ohnmächtig scheinenden Menschen vordringen.”

the high mountains; our *Volk* was great and strong and rich in thriving life and could bear it when individuals fell, knowing that it was a warning that there are still values that do lie in the everyday; it should benefit the man who, through his death, forces those addicted to the moment to gaze up for a moment at the eternal heights. But today our *Volk* is poor and dispossessed; it needs every man and especially those who could risk their lives for an idea; and that is the case today for mountaineering...²⁴⁶

Yet what were these values that mountaineering was supposed to cultivate among mountaineers? They were above all masculine attributes that emphasized strength and power, developed in the clutches of immense danger, won through “hard work, sweat and effort”²⁴⁷:

The mountains teach us a great deal. Endurance, austerity and courage, cool deliberation and quick decisiveness, true camaraderie and sacrifice, self-sufficiency and several other ideal values that have not been won with the safety of a rope, but rather between life and death, on the naked walls of a cliff or on a treacherous glacier.²⁴⁸

For the mountaineer Eugen Guido Lammer, the development of the mountaineer’s mind and body took on explicitly gendered overtones. Reaching the summit of the feminized mountain became an act of sexual conquest that fulfilled man’s masculine goal;

A quiet love for the mountains seems to me too passive, too feminine: we can feel this way about an idyllic flat landscape, or about a flowery valley between green

²⁴⁶ Heinrich Pfannl, “Ein ernstes Wort an die alpine Jugend” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 18 April 1824: 1-2. This entire passage is bolded in the original. “Damals war unser Volkreich, sein ganzes Leben ging aber ins Materielle, niedrige Gesinnung drängte sich vor in den Alltag und mit Erbitterung wendeten wir Geistigen uns von dieser Wirklichkeit mit ihren sinnlosen Zwecken zu den zweckbefreiten Einsamkeiten des Hochgebirges; unser Volk war groß und stark und reich an blühendem Leben und konnte es tragen, wenn Einzelne fielen, als Mahnung, daß es noch Werte gibt, die nicht im Alltag liegen; es mochte ihm frommen, wenn sie wenigstens mit ihrem Tod die dem Alltag Verfallenen zwangen, für einen Augenblick aufzuschauen zu den ewigen Höhen. Heute aber ist unser Volk arm und entrechtet; es braucht jeden Mann und solche am meisten, die für eine Idee ihr Leben einsetzen können; und ist es heute der Alpinismus, so kann es morgen noch eine edlere sein...”

²⁴⁷ Enzensperger 43.

²⁴⁸ *MDÖAV* (1918): 126. “Die Berge lehren uns gar vieles. Ausdauer, Entsagung und Mut, kühle Besonnenheit und rasches Entschließen, treue Kameradschaft und Aufopferung, Selbsthilfe und viele andere ideale Güter, die nicht am sicheren Drahtseil, sondern nur zwischen Leben und Tod in freier Felsenwand oder auf tückischen Gletschern erworben werden.”

hills, but never about a raw Amazon against whom we constantly have to fight for our life ... We also love our proud mountains passionately and loyally, but not in a languid manner – we love them hateful and struggling, we love them most when they lay conquered underneath our feet; we don't want to comfortably pluck this pleasure from lowly branches, but rather we want to take the victor's prize in hard struggle with the elements. Pleasure and deed are not mutually exclusive; together, they build the complete, real man – but deeds are more important, *and this is the core of mountaineering.*²⁴⁹

The overt sexuality of this passage suggests the erotic investment that mountaineers could have in their alpine imaginary. The rhetoric of conquest, presented as the conflict between masculinity and femininity, casts the mountaineer as a vital, powerful sexual force that overcomes the reluctance and opposition of the feminized mountain.

Other mountaineers imagined that masculinity was about hardening the body and washing away the wounds inflicted by modern life and civilization. In the following passage, the mountains become a recuperative space where the mountaineer can seek both healing of past injuries and training to withstand future battles:

... we who are equally bold and free in the summertime and the winter storm, in golden sunshine and the wild rampage of the elements – we only shrink in fear at the voice of warning that whispers to us at the right time, inside of us – for those of us who go into the sublime mountains, the mountains are more than simple objects in a panorama; they are a place of light and effortless recuperation. The mountains serve us above all as a reaction against the exhausting and leveling influences of modern culture, which banishes every fresh need for action into the iron chains of quotidian everyday life. How in the world are we supposed to learn, under these circumstances, the essential masculine virtues: courage, prudence and determination – is there a better place to develop these virtues than in the high mountains?²⁵⁰

²⁴⁹ Lammer, *Jungborn* 146. “Die stille Liebe zu den Bergen ist mir zu passiv, zu weiblich: Diese können wir fühlen zu einer idyllischen Flachlandschaft, zu einem blumigen Tale zwischen grünen Hügeln, nimmer zu einer rauhen Amazone, der wir beständig unser Leben abringen müssen. ... Wohl lieben auch wir die stolzen Berge leidenschaftlich und true, doch nicht träge genießend, sondern wir lieben sie hassend und bekämpfend, wir lieben sie erst, wenn sie besiegt unter unserem Fuße liegen; den Genuß wollen wir nicht bequem vom niedrigen Zweige pflücken, sondern in hartem Ringen als Siegespreis den Elementen abnötigen. Genuß und Tat schließen sich nicht aus, sondern bilden vereint erst den vollen, echten Menschen, die Tat aber ist das Höhere, *und sie bildet auch den Kern des Alpinismus.*”

²⁵⁰ Enzensperger 42. “Aber uns, die wir frei und kühn zur Sommerszeit wie im Wintersturm, bei goldenem Sonnenschein und im wilden Toben der Elemente – vor nichts zurückschrecken als vor der warnenden

By imagining mountainous geography as the site of personal and national regeneration, mountaineers constructed an ideal space where masculinity and nationalism, Volk and *Heimat* could be venerated. As the next chapter will show, however, the construction of alpine masculinity did not extend to certain members who had long been part of the Alpenverein: the Jewish mountaineers.

Stimme, die zur rechten Zeit in unserem Innen ertönt – die hehren Berge durchziehen, uns sind sie mehr als bloße Aussichtsobjekte, als eine Stätte leichter und müheloser Erholung. Sie dienen uns vor allem als Reaktion gegen die erschlaffenden und alles nivillierenden Einflüsse der modernen Kultur, die jeden frischen Tatendrang in die eisernen Ketten des gewöhnlich dahinlaufenden Lebens bannt. Wie in aller Welt sollen wir bei unseren heutigen Zuständen die ersten Tugenden des Mannes: Mut, Umsicht, Entschlossenheit üben, wo bietet sich ein besseres Feld zur Betätigung derselben als im Hochgebirge?”

Chapter 4: Anti-Semitism in the Alpenverein

Before the outspoken and virulent anti-Semitism of the Nazi party consolidated its grip on German cultural politics in 1933, the Alpenverein had long exhibited anti-Semitic tendencies. At the turn of the century, some local Alpenverein sections had included so-called “Aryan clauses” (*Arierparagraphen*) in their charters that either implicitly or explicitly prohibited Jewish applicants from membership. In 1899, members of the Alpenverein section “Berlin” (which had existed since 1869) founded the Mark Brandenburg section, claiming that “Berlin” was overrun with Jewish citizens; the new section’s charter limited membership to “baptized Christian German citizens.”²⁵¹ In 1910, the Academic Alpenverein section in Munich was founded as a club for “highly educated gentlemen of Germanic descent.”²⁵² In both cases, German(ic) was not meant to include Jewish citizens of Germany.

Although some sections of the Alpenverein exhibited a “certain anti-Jewish attitude” around the turn of the century, these tendencies became especially pronounced after the Great War, and nowhere as powerfully as in Vienna.²⁵³ Before the War, the Alpenverein section in Vienna had already incorporated an Aryan clause in their founding charter. The anti-Semitic Alpenverein organizations in Vienna, and throughout Austria, were extraordinary in the sheer virulence of their anti-Jewish hatred. Such was their tenacity that the Austrian sections, a minority within the Alpenverein, were able to

²⁵¹ Helmuth Zebhauser, *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat* (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 70.

²⁵² Zebhauser 70.

²⁵³ Zebhauser 73.

wage a four-year campaign that would eventually bend the will of the Alpenverein toward their anti-Semitic aims.

This chapter traces the development of anti-Semitism within the German-Austrian Alpenverein. By situating the anti-Semitism practiced within the Alpenverein in a larger historical context, this chapter suggests that the Alpenverein's anti-Semitism was highly unpopular with both the public and many Alpenverein members. Proponents of anti-Semitism, the overwhelming majority of whom were Austrian, exploited discourses of nation, race and *Volksgemeinschaft* in their battle against the Jewish members within the Alpenverein's ranks. The anti-Semites' success was due largely to the Alpenverein's unwillingness to risk splitting the Alpenverein between Germany and Austria; the cost of keeping the Alpenverein together was the exclusion of the Jewish Germans and Austrians. The transnational character of anti-Semitism within the Alpenverein is an important feature of this chapter, which suggests that, within the context of mountaineering, anti-Semitism existed in different intensities in Germany and Austria, and that Austria took the lead in the persecution of Jewish mountaineers.

This chapter also focuses on how associational life in Germany and Austria was a locus of political ideology and civic life, and how cultural associations reveal, with great specificity, how wider cultural debates and attitudes were contested and challenged at the local, regional and national levels. In the particular context of anti-Semitism, this chapter shows how German and Austrian attitudes about Jewish mountaineers collided in the mid-1920s, resulting in anti-Semitic policies that were very unpopular with a majority of the Alpenverein's membership. As we shall see, the German and Austrian sections of the Alpenverein had vastly different motivations for implementing anti-Semitic policies, and this case study makes a contribution to our understanding of the development and character of anti-Semitism during the interwar years.

JEWISH TOURISTS IN THE WEIMAR REPUBLIC

The Alpenverein was not the only organization to implement and enforce anti-Semitic exclusionary policies. Jewish citizens in Germany and Austria were subjected to an increasing amount of harassment, not only in their hometowns but also while on vacation. The historians Jacob Borut and Frank Bajohr characterize the Weimar period as one in which anti-Semitism became increasingly felt in tourist facilities such as hotels and resorts.²⁵⁴ Both studies provide an illuminating glimpse into the Jewish experience of Weimar tourism, which helps to situate anti-Semitic developments in the Alpenverein.

Jewish tourists experienced anti-Semitism in multiple forms at the hands of the German population. Nationalist and pro-Nazi groups often harassed Jewish guests at dinner or in bars. Some hotel owners, under relentless pressure from long-time customers, finally yielded and wrote to their Jewish clientele that they regretfully could not accept their business anymore.²⁵⁵ In certain areas – especially along the North Sea coast and in Bavaria – some facilities actually advertised that they did not deal with Jewish businesses, ostensibly in order to attract Christian German customers.

Anti-Semitic policies at tourist facilities were in place long before the Nazis came to power in 1933.²⁵⁶ Increasing anti-Semitism at resorts, restaurants, pubs and other public spaces became so intense around the turn of the century that the Central Society of German Citizens of the Jewish Faith (hereafter CV) began to keep lists of anti-Semitic facilities so that their readership could avoid an unpleasant surprise while on vacation.

²⁵⁴ Frank Bajohr, “Unser Hotel ist judenfrei.” *Bäder-Antisemitismus im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Frankfurt: Fischer Verlag, 2003). Jacob Borut, “Antisemitism in Tourist Facilities in Weimar Germany,” *Yad Vashem Studies XXVIII*, ed. David Silberklang (Jerusalem: Yad Vashem, 2000) 7-50.

²⁵⁵ Borut 18.

²⁵⁶ It should also be noted here that anti-Semitic policies at tourist facilities were not unique to Germany; such policies were also in place in the U.S. during the 1920s and 1930s. See Bajohr 142-170.

Business were included on the list when Jewish tourists complained to the CV; in some cases, anti-Semitic business owners even wrote to the CV, disappointed that they were *not* on the black list.²⁵⁷ By 1932, the list had become so extensive that the CV established a travel service to help guide Jewish tourists toward the few remaining resort areas that were deemed safe for them.

For Jewish mountaineers within the Alpenverein, anti-Semitism came to the fore with increasing frequency, especially in the 1920s. Throughout the 1920s, articles began to appear in the publications of the Alpenverein discussing questions related to contemporary pseudo-scientific debates on race. Essays and articles dealt with “racial problems,” such as the racial history of the native alpine inhabitant and their connection to ancient Germanic tribes.²⁵⁸ Investigations of racial history attributed traditional forms of culture, such as the folk dance and music of alpine villages, to vague notions of inheritance and a national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*).²⁵⁹ Immutable behaviors and attitudes were associated with the external appearance of race, such as physiognomy and anatomy. Speaking of the infatuation with the alpine villager, a common theme in the alpine literature of the 1920s, the film critic Oskar Kalbus, commenting on the representation of the alpine peasants in the mountain film, *Das blaue Licht* (*The Blue Light*, 1932), “praised the alpine community’s racial vitality, admiring physiognomies that extended back to the Visigoths.”²⁶⁰ Imagining the Alps as a racial anthropological

²⁵⁷ Borut 22.

²⁵⁸ Alfred Müller, Geschichte des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins. Ein Beitrag zur Sozialgeschichte des Vereinwesens, diss., Westfälische Wilhelms-Universität zu Münster, 1979, 177.

²⁵⁹ Ernst Hamza, “Folkloristische Studien aus dem niederösterreichischen Wechselgebiet” ZDÖAV (1913): 81-127; Ernst Hamza, “Folkloristische Studien aus dem niederösterreichischen Wechselgebiet” ZDÖAV (1914): 102-123. Hamza’s anthropological investigations were divided into studies on four topics: dialect, song, costume and dance.

²⁶⁰ Eric Rentschler, The Ministry of Illusion. Nazi Cinema and its Afterlife (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996) 41. For more on the cultural significance of physiognomy, see: Sabine Hake, “Faces of Weimar

preserve differentiated the people found there not only into mountaineers, tourists, villagers, etc., but also into distinct racial categories that later became essential tools for determining who was and who was not a member of the *Volksgemeinschaft*.

When it came to deciding who could be a member of the Alpenverein, however, the central authorities in Innsbruck deferred such decisions to local Alpenverein sections. Unlike the *Österreichischer Gebirgsverein* (Austrian Mountain Society) and the *Österreichischer Alpenklub* (Austrian Alpine Club), which both implemented Aryan clauses in 1921 for all of their sections, the Alpenverein remained reluctant to demand the same from all of its local sections. This indecision at the highest levels of the Alpenverein created confusion and frustration for anti-Semitic, philo-Semitic and Jewish mountaineers alike.

In 1921, Richard Fischer, a self-described “former Jew” and a former captain in the Imperial and Royal Austrian Army, attempted to clear up one of these ambiguous situations. Fischer wrote to the main Alpenverein office in Vienna on 17 September 1921, about his attempts to become a member of the Alpenverein in Berlin: “I have approached the local group in Berlin to apply for membership, but they have the Aryan clause in their statutes, which denies me admission as a former Jew.”²⁶¹ He wanted to know whether it was necessary “to have a sponsor, since there are no Alpenverein members among my acquaintances. I believe, however, that my position at a large bank

Germany,” *The Image in Dispute: Art and Cinema in the Age of Photography*, ed. Dudley Andrew (Austin: U of Texas P, 1997) 117-147.

²⁶¹ Letter from Richard Fischer to the German-Austrian Alpenverein leadership in Vienna, dated September 17, 1921. Qtd. in Zebhauser 242. “Ich habe mich zwecks Aufnahme an die Ortsgruppe Berlin gewandt, die jedoch den “Arierparagrafen” in ihrem Statut hat, welcher mit daher als ehemaligen Juden den Eintritt verbietet.”

in Berlin and my rank as a former captain in the Imperial and Royal Army would offer evidence of my character.”²⁶²

The Alpenverein responded to Fischer’s query by noting that, while the Mark Brandenburg section had the Aryan clause, the other four sections in Berlin did not (Berlin, Charlottenburg, Hohenzollern and Kurmark). They recommended that Fischer try to join a different local section:

The Alpenverein recommend that all of its sections make their admission decisions on the recommendation of at least one member. We do not know whether this recommendation is occasionally waived. Since there are numerous employees at the large banks in Berlin who belong to the Alpenverein, it should not be difficult to find someone to vouch for you.²⁶³

Notice that there is not a single answer to Fischer’s question regarding the Aryan clause, nor is there any clarification offered in the matter of Jewish admission policies. By advising Jewish applicants to avoid sections that had implemented the Aryan clause, the Alpenverein was contributing to the confusion surrounding the leadership’s stance on questions of anti-Semitism.

The Alpenverein’s leadership refused to commit to a decision on the Jewish question mainly because of its longstanding policy that the Alpenverein should abstain from political affairs. The Alpenverein had been founded with its doors open to all, regardless of its members’ political beliefs and affiliations, and the leadership continued to hold this ideal. Several commentators asserted, however, that Germany’s defeat in

²⁶² Fischer to Alpenverein. “...einen Paten zu haben, da sich z.B. unter meinen Bekannten keine Alpenvereinsmitglieder befinden. – Ich glaube aber, dass meine Position bei einer Berliner Grossbank und mein Rang als ehemaliger Hauptmann der k. & k. Armee auch eine gewisse Bürgschaft bieten würden.”

²⁶³ Letter from the German-Austrian Alpenverein leadership in Vienna to Richard Fischer, dated September 27, 1921. Qtd. in Zebhauser 242-243. “Im Alpenverein pflegen alle Sektionen bei der Entscheidung über die Aufnahme die Empfehlung durch mindestens ein Mitglied zu fordern. Ob im Einzelfalle ausnahmesweise davon abgesehen wird, ist uns nicht bekannt. Da übrigens zahlreiche Angestellte der Berliner Grossbanken dem Alpenverein angehören, dürfte es nicht schwer fallen unter ihnen einen sogenannten Paten zu suchen.”

World War I had changed everything. In 1923, one observer, writing in the popular alpine weekly, *Der Bergsteiger*, described how apolitical stances were possible before WW I, but not after:

“Politics don’t belong in the mountains,” the German mountaineer has always thought, and in the carefree times before World War I, when the average fellow rarely thought about politics at home, it was equally easy for mountaineers to hold themselves to this principle.²⁶⁴

The Austrian sections, however, urged the Alpenverein to abandon its policy of political abstention, asserting that the “Aryan question” was a national emergency:

One more time, the indignant cry arose from the membership, “politics don’t belong in the Alpenverein!” as Austria was flooded with Jewish elements after the end of World War I, requiring the Austrian *Volk*, including the Austrian Alpenverein sections, to act against this dangerous wave of foreign infiltration...²⁶⁵

The language of siege, already familiar to the mountaineering readership from their battles against the over-industrialization of alpine space, was extended to describe the imagined plight of the people of Austria. The German Alpenverein sections were to help combat Jewish influence in Austria and thereby preserve both Germany and Austria:

Why don’t we leave the decision to the Austrians, who are the most affected? Because it looks like politics, pure and simple! Better just to let our own people suffer. There’s that suicidal sense of German justice, unfortunately, that our politicians have so often practiced to our detriment.²⁶⁶

²⁶⁴ “Alpenvereine und Politik,” *Der Bergsteiger* 28 December 1923: 170. ““Politik gehört nicht in die Berge,” so hat der deutsche Bergsteiger immer gedacht, und in den sorglosen Zeiten vor dem Krieg, als auch der Durchschnittsmensch zu Hause sich nur selten um Politik kümmerte, fiel es ihm umso leichter, danach zu handeln.”

²⁶⁵ “Alpenvereine und Politik” 171. “Ein anderes Mal erscholl der entrüstete Ruf aus Mitgliederkreisen “Politik gehört nicht in den Alpenverein!” als die Ueberflutung Österreichs mit jüdischen Elementen nach Kriegschluß mit weiten Volkskreisen schließlich auch die österreichischen Alpenvereinsektionen zur Abschließung gegen die Ueberfremdungsgefahr veranlaßte...”

²⁶⁶ “Alpenvereine und Politik” 171. “Warum überlassen wir die Entscheidung nicht den Österreichern, die es angeht? Bloß weil es nach Politik aussieht! Dann lieber das eigene Volkstum Schaden leiden lassen. Das ist deutsche selbstmörderische Gerechtigkeit, leider, wie wir sie auch in der hohen Politik zu unserem Schaden so oft bewiesen haben.”

Such calls for German-Austrian solidarity on anti-Semitic affairs did not find many sympathetic listeners in Germany, but anti-Semitism was stirring in Austria.

EDUARD PICHL AND AUSTRIAN ANTI-SEMITISM

Eduard Pichl was without a doubt the primary driving force behind the Alpenverein's anti-Semitic policies. Pichl had been part of the pan-German movement associated with Georg Schönerer, an Austrian nationalist and anti-Semite, since 1896. Pichl wore his anti-Semitism proudly on his sleeve, boasting of how he "became a follower of Schönerer and an enemy of the Jews in word and deed. I became adept at techniques for combating the Jews"; indeed, Pichl was described as the "devourer of Jews".²⁶⁷ Without Pichl's sheer tenacity, it is highly unlikely that Austrian anti-Semitism would have become Alpenverein policy.

Anti-Semitism in Austria was particularly virulent in the 1920s; Vienna in particular had a dark history of anti-Semitic policies under its longtime mayor, Karl Lueger. Although Lueger may have used anti-Semitism as a politically expedient tool in Viennese politics during the late nineteenth century, the baleful effect of his political machinations resonated far beyond the context of their historical moment of utility.²⁶⁸ In Austria's proverbial *Vielvölkerstaat* (multi-ethnic state), Jewish people were described as one of many "tiny minorities, malleable and compliant, even obsequious, driven by

²⁶⁷ Qtd in Rainer Amstädter, *Der Alpinismus: Kultur, Organisation, Politik* (Vienna: WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1996) 161. "... wurde ich auch Anhänger Schönerers und Judengegner in Wort und Tat. Als Judenfeind war ich an der Technik bald bekannt, an einer stillen Wand prangten die Worte "Pichl – Judenfresser."

²⁶⁸ For more on Karl Lueger's anti-Semitism, see: Richard S. Geehr, trans. and ed., *"I Decide Who is a Jew!" The Papers of Dr. Karl Lueger* (Washington, D.C.: University Press of America, 1982) 321-335; Richard S. Geehr, *Karl Lueger. Mayor of Fin de Siecle Vienna* (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 1990); Peter Pulzer, *The Rise of Political Anti-Semitism in Germany & Austria* (London: Peter Halban, 1988); and the excellent collection of essays: Ivar Oxaal, Michael Pollak and Gerhard Botz, eds., *Jews, Antisemitism and Culture in Vienna* (London and New York: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1987).

careless greed.”²⁶⁹ Others described Jewish immigrants as one of many foreign peoples threatening to overwhelm and destroy Austria. Walter Riehl, who later became the Nazi party leader for all of Austria, was invited by Pichl to speak to the Alpenverein section “Austria” on 22 February 1921, where he said

Those who have grown up in our city and under the influence of our culture we can leave alone, but we must oppose these streaming masses from the east. The Alpenverein membership card should not be a document that could become the basis for Galician Jews to receive immigration and residence permits.²⁷⁰

Anxieties about the influx of Eastern European Jews coexisted alongside political and economic anti-Semitism. The Austrian mountaineer Fritz Rigele employed the anti-Semitic image of the Jewish businessman as a conniving financier out to swindle and impoverish Germans:

The extraordinary uncertainties of the economics and finance sectors during the postwar era provided a foundation, inappropriate for Germans, on which the Jew could be much more successful than the German. The consequence was that fortunes great and small were transferred from the hands of German Aryans into the hands of Jews.²⁷¹

Rigele went on, blaming Jewish citizens for the apocryphal “stab-in-the-back,” the loss of the War, and for the humiliations of the Treaty of Versailles. Rigele described Jewish people as parasites upon the wounded body of the pan-German nation:

²⁶⁹ “Alpenvereine und Politik” 171. “... kleine Minderheiten, anpassend und gefügig, sogar anschnierig, größere Mengen von rücksichtsloser Eigensucht getrieben.”

²⁷⁰ Helmuth Zebhauser and Maike Trentin-Meyer, *Zwischen Idylle und Tummelplatz* (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1996) 358. “Jenen, die in unserer Stadt und unter dem Einfluß ihrer Kultur aufgewachsen sind, wollen wir nicht nahetreten, aber dem Massenzug aus dem Osten wollen wir entgegentreten. Die Alpenvereinsmitgliedkarte soll kein Dokument sein, auf Grund dessen sich die galizischen Juden Einreise- und Aufenthaltsbewilligungen verschaffen.”

²⁷¹ Fritz Rigele, *Fünfzig Jahre Bergsteiger, Erlebnisse und Gedanken* (Berlin-Wilmersdorf: “Sport und Spiel” Verlag, 1935) 331. “Die volks- und besonders finanzwirtschaftlich so außerordentlich unsichere Nachkriegszeit war der Boden, auf dem, begünstigt durch eine für deutschen Geist nicht ganz zweckmäßige Gesetzgebung, der Jude viel erfolgreicher arbeiten konnte als der Deutsche. Die Folge davon war: Vermögen groß und klein und von verschiedenster Art gehen aus den Händen von Deutschen (Ariern) in solche von Juden über.”

The German *Volk* were lying on the floor, our enemies abroad felt themselves victors in every regard, and demonstrated this in German lands by provoking us without restraint. Foreign elements sprouted like parasites out of the body of the *Volk*. There were two spirits in jobs, culture, politics and sports. One wanted to accommodate the powers that be like a slave, exploiting any available opportunity during this occupation. The others became hard in their own sorrow and pushed back against our foreign masters.²⁷²

Rigele thanked Pichl's master, Schönerer, for identifying the source of all this misery: the Jews.²⁷³ Describing Jewish people as "a *Volk* unto themselves," Rigele urged their expulsion and exclusion from both Austrian and German alpine organizations. And Rigele was not alone in his anti-Semitic fervor. By 1924, 50 Austrian sections had incorporated the Aryan clause into their charters, and another 40 sections had passed anti-Semitic declarations, even though these sections already had Jewish members.²⁷⁴

THE DONAULAND AFFAIR

In Vienna in 1921, a new section of the Alpenverein, named "Donauland," was founded. The new section consisted primarily of Jewish members, but also included some Christian members of the "Austria" section who left in protest against that section's anti-Semitic policies. There were several prominent people in the Donauland section, including the psychologist Viktor Frankl, the music critic Joseph Braunstein and the director Fred Zinnemann, who would later find fame in Hollywood.²⁷⁵ For Jewish and

²⁷² Rigele 330. "Das deutsche Volk lag am Boden, das feindliche Ausland fühlte sich als Sieger auf allen Linien und zeigte das auch in deutschen Landen, ohne sich Zwang anzutun. Volksfremde Elemente sprossen parasitenhaft aus dem eigenen Volkskörper. Da schieden sich die Geister in Beruf, Kultur, Politik und Sport. Die einen wollten sich knechtsinnig mit dem Bestehenden abfinden und aus der Fremdherrschaft noch so viel wie möglich Nutzen ziehen. Die anderen wurden hart am eigenen Elend und setzten dem Druck der Fremdherrschaft angemessenen Gegendruck entgegen."

²⁷³ Rigele 332.

²⁷⁴ Zebhauser, Alpinismus 76.

²⁷⁵ Zebhauser, Alpinismus 74. Victor Frankl was very proud of his alpine achievements. After surviving Auschwitz, Frankl wrote that "I had completed the course of work to become a mountain guide and was so proud of this that I took my guide badge into the concentration camp. I only gave it up when forced to do so

tolerant Christian mountaineers, the Donauland section offered a haven from the prevalent atmosphere of anti-Semitism in other Austrian alpine clubs.

The Donauland section was admitted to the Alpenverein in 1921, although the reasons had nothing to do with philo-Semitism; instead, the club's leadership claimed that their mission was to "protect the Alpenverein from a political movement" and to safeguard the club from political debates about anti-Semitism.²⁷⁶ By admitting Donauland, the leadership hoped to avoid a political confrontation with the anti-Semites within the Alpenverein by creating an exclusively Jewish section. The Alpenverein's executive committee reasoned that if Jewish mountaineers had their own section within the Alpenverein, then individual sections that had implemented the Aryan clause would be content with the exclusion of Jewish members from their own section. Shortly after Donauland became a section of the Alpenverein, Eduard Pichl fired the first shot in a political battle that would last for three years, demanding that the Alpenverein set aside their decision and expel the Donauland section.²⁷⁷

Pichl's petition ignited a fierce debate within the Alpenverein, with a number of voices raised against the Austrian sections' persecution of Donauland. From the beginning of this conflict, the Alpenverein's executive committee was opposed to the anti-Semitic agitation emanating from Austria. The chairman of the Alpenverein warned that taking a stand against the Donauland section would unnecessarily implicate the Alpenverein in political battles that would undermine the club's integrity and unity:

We want to keep political goals ... in the widest sense out of our organization, because otherwise we would have to fear disruptions within the club. We want to

in Auschwitz." Viktor Frankl, "Der Alpinismus und die Pathologie des Zeitgeistes" Alpenvereinsjahrbuch (1988): 61.

²⁷⁶ MDÖAV (1921): 70.

²⁷⁷ MDÖAV (1921): 36.

remain true to our fundamental principles, which have guided us for 60 years. Quiet and peace will immediately return as soon as the gentlemen end their campaign against the Donauland section.²⁷⁸

The Austrian sections replied that “*völkisch* thinking is not *political* in Austria,” positioning anti-Semitism as a necessary defense against what they imagined to be an overwhelmingly powerful enemy.²⁷⁹

Expressions of anti-Semitism extended far beyond the petitions and debates within the Alpenverein. Increasingly, swastikas and anti-Semitic placards appeared at Alpenverein facilities, especially in Austria. At some Austrian huts, signs reading “Admission forbidden to Jews” or “Jews not wanted” hung on the doors. When asked what they would do in the case of an emergency, if a Jewish hiker needed shelter for the night, alpine hut administrators replied, “one more or one less Jew, it doesn’t matter.”²⁸⁰ Such anti-Semitic signs were not limited to Austria, nor to the Alps. In Bad Nenndorf, a small resort town west of Hanover in northwest Germany, there were “posters with “*Juden haben keinen Zutritt*” (“Jews not allowed”) on practically every tree.”²⁸¹ Anti-Semites and Nazis also carved “swastikas on wooden public benches on the promenades and forest paths of the resorts,” polluting public spaces all over Germany and Austria.²⁸² The historian Frank Bajohr notes that swastikas and anti-Semitic graffiti were quite common on hiking signs and huts in the Alps during the Weimar Republic.²⁸³ Even the

²⁷⁸ MDÖAV (1922): 57. “Wir wollen die politischen Ziele, ... im weitesten Sinne aus der Bewegung des Vereins fernhalten, weil wir sonst eine Zersetzung des Vereins befürchten müssen. Wir wollen den Grundsätzen treu bleiben, nach denen wir 50 Jahre gelebt haben. Ruhe und Frieden wird sofort kommen, wenn die Herren sich der Bewegung gegen die Sektion Donauland enthalten.”

²⁷⁹ Amstädter 299.

²⁸⁰ MDÖAV (1923): 105. “...auf einen mehr oder weniger von diesen kommt es nicht an.”

²⁸¹ Borut 30.

²⁸² Borut 31.

²⁸³ Bajohr 68.

semi-private space of a hotel dining room could become the site of anti-Semitic barbs; some Jewish families found swastikas painted on napkins at the dinner table, and one Jewish hotel guest “found an anti-Semitic note inside his wallet, after he had placed it in the wardrobe of his hotel.”²⁸⁴

Jewish members responded to this persecution in outrage, describing German treatment of its Jewish citizens in terms of France’s postwar treatment of Germany:

Is there anything more arbitrary than when one says, “it is an injustice that you exist upon this earth?” For God’s sake, the simple fact that something exists cannot be the basis of a judgment ... I want to point out that Germany is suffering the same fate at France’s hands. That is what is happening to us, the exact same thing ... Injustice towards the weak only causes more injustice.²⁸⁵

Yet assimilated Jewish Austrians believed that they had seen the specter of anti-Semitism before, and that they would survive its ravages again. They associated anti-Semitic beliefs with the aggressive nationalism of far right political parties, urging Germans to realize who was really to blame for the political bind Germany and Austria were in:

We Austrians have long been familiar with the disastrous activity of radical pan-German elements. They are the ones who disrupted the way of life in the old monarchy, who did away with our understanding and peaceful coexistence with the other nations; they are responsible for the fact that thousands of Germans must now languish under the yoke of foreign domination.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁴ Borut 30.

²⁸⁵ MDÖAV (1922): 57. “Gibt es eine größere Willkür, als wenn jemand sagt: ‘Es ist ein Unrecht, daß du auch auf der Welt bist?’ Das bloße Dasein kann doch um Gotteswillen nicht Grund zu einer Verurteilung werden... Ich mache Sie darauf aufmerksam, daß dieses Unrecht Frankreich Deutschland gegenüber begeht. In Wirklichkeit ist, was hier versucht wird, auch nichts anderes. ... Unrecht gegenüber einem Schwachen zeugt immer wieder Unrecht.”

²⁸⁶ Qtd. in Amstädter 280. “Uns Oesterreichern ist die verhängnisvolle Tätigkeit der deutsch-radikalen Elemente seit langer Zeit bekannt. Sie sind es, die in der alten Monarchie eine Verständigung und ein ruhiges Zusammenleben mit den anderen Nationen stets verhindert und es letzten Endes zusammengebracht haben, daß heute Tausende deutscher Stammesgenossen unter fremdem Joch schmachten müssen.”

Such proclamations, however, only incited Pichl and his fellow anti-Semites to further agitation, and they continued their assault on the Alpenverein's Jewish members.

In 1922, under Pichl's leadership, 63 Alpenverein sections, primarily Austrian but also some Bavarian sections, joined together to form the *Deutschvölkischer Bund* (hereafter DVB) inside the Alpenverein. The new organization's primary goal was to solve "the Jewish question" within the Alpenverein by eliminating Donauland from its ranks.²⁸⁷ At the formal level, the DVB's strategy focused on changing voting procedures at the highest levels of the Alpenverein, thereby accruing more power for their vocal minority. When it came to persuading other Alpenverein sections to join their anti-Semitic agitation, however, the DVB resorted to a number of illogical yet eventually effective tactics.

Various sections belonging to the DVB accused Jewish mountaineers of a variety of offenses, but the sure hand guiding these petitions and complaints was clearly Pichl's. The Bavarian sections Hochland and Oberland filed a petition at the 1922 general assembly in Bayreuth, accusing the Jewish section Donauland of endangering the unity of the German-Austrian Alpenverein; the motion to accept the petition was defeated by a vote of 910 to 512.²⁸⁸ At the 1923 general assembly in Tölz, the section "Austria" accused Donauland of participating in an international Jewish plot to provoke infighting within the Alpenverein; this accusation likewise failed to garner the necessary votes.²⁸⁹

As the section "Austria" and the DVB continued to mount ever-more hysterical attacks on the Donauland section, their anti-Semitic rhetoric became increasingly pernicious. Jews were accused of using their international press to defame and slander the

²⁸⁷ Müller 185.

²⁸⁸ Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 76.

²⁸⁹ Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 78.

German *Volk*. Jews were said to have foreign blood running through their veins, making them irrevocably alien to those of German descent. Jews ostensibly paraded about with their wealth while German mothers had to work day and night to make ends meet. The Jews' materialist, commercial approach to the world degraded all things holy to the Germans, such as idealism, Nature and religion. Jews threatened the unity of the *Volksgemeinschaft*, the German culture based upon the innate qualities of the German race. And the section "Austria" viewed the section Donauland as a Jewish organization that wanted to disrupt the German community of mountaineers. As one commentator noted, "the Edelweiss should be replaced neither by the swastika, nor the star of David."²⁹⁰

There was significant resistance to the DVB's anti-Semitic agenda, both inside and outside of the Alpenverein. The mountaineer Franz Kleinhans, a member of the Austrian Touring Club, wrote an essay entitled, "On the Question of the Aryan Clause," and submitted it to the Alpenverein for publication in the weekly *Mitteilungen*. The Alpenverein shelved it.²⁹¹ The Donauland section, however, printed Kleinhans's essay in their own publication, where he eloquently wrote,

There was a time in alpinism when there were no second thoughts when we heard the cry ring out, emergency! help! Today, people in certain circles ask themselves whether the person crying out for help might be a member of the Donauland section... People wear the sun-wheel [swastika] on their chest, but inside they have become dark.²⁹²

²⁹⁰ Müller 186-187. "Das Edelweiß solle nicht durch das Hakenkreuz ersetzt werden, aber auch nicht durch den Davidstern."

²⁹¹ The Austrian Touring Club (*Österreichischer Touristen-Klub*) was already struggling with the "Jewish question": in 1920, their Vienna section voted to amend their charter to include the Aryan clause, and in 1922 the entire club followed suit. Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 76.

²⁹² *Nachrichten der Sektion Donauland* 36 (1924): 113. "Es gab eine Zeit im Alpinismus, da galt kein Besinnen, wenn der Ruf erscholl: Menschen in Not! Heute fragt man sich in gewissen Kreisen bereits ängstlich, ob der Hilfeheischende nicht etwa Mitglied der Sektion "Donauland" sei. Man heftet sich das Sonnenrad an die Brust. Im Inneren aber ist es dunkel geworden."

Kleinhans was not the only advocate of Donauland's right to remain a section within the Alpenverein. The second-highest official within the Alpenverein, Rehlen of Munich, defended the Alpenverein's Jewish members, pointing out the ridiculous nature of the "stab-in-the-back legend": "after every lost war, the clueless masses fall upon the Jews as the only guilty parties..."²⁹³ Another Alpenverein member who was appalled at the DVB's agitation was Phillip Reuter of Essen; Reuter, representing three north German sections at the 1923 general assembly, railed against the "fascism" of the DVB.²⁹⁴

When the DVB's dire warnings of international Jewish conspiracies failed to generate the votes necessary for Donauland's expulsion at the 1923 general assembly, Pichl and his allies decided to pursue a two-pronged line of attack. First, the DVB would accuse Donauland of promoting behavior contrary to the mountaineer's code of honor, such as vandalizing alpine huts or failing to help other mountaineers in need. Second, the DVB would continue to recruit other Alpenverein sections in its anti-Semitic campaign until it achieved the critical mass necessary to threaten the Alpenverein leadership convincingly with secession.

At the 1924 general assembly in Rosenheim, Dr. Reinhard von Sydow, the Alpenverein's highest official, amid concerns about the unity of the Alpenverein, indicated that he might be ready to compromise with Pichl and the DVB. The Rosenheim Compromise, as it came to be called, was a small but significant amendment to the Alpenverein charter. The affected clause had formerly read, "the club is unpolitical; the discussion and pursuit of political affairs lies beyond its responsibilities." By redefining

²⁹³ Nachrichten der Sektion Donauland 36 (1923) 127. "Nach jedem verlorenen Krieg hat sich die urteilslose Menge auf die Juden also einzig Schuldige gestürzt..."

²⁹⁴ Zebhauser, Alpinismus 78.

the term “political,” the DVB’s proposed language completely altered the meaning of the clause:

The new formulation of the constitution should read that the Alpenverein is an apolitical organization, and that the cultivation and promotion of national culture and the spirit of the Fatherland shall not be limited by the national sections.²⁹⁵

By devolving the authority to make decisions about what was and was not political, Pichl and his allies had created an opening, one which they took full advantage of as they began to prepare their final assault.

Eduard Pichl, along with his fellow mountaineer and anti-Semite Fritz Rigele, called a special meeting of the DVB in Bischofshofen. Over 100 representatives from the Austrian Alpenverein sections were in attendance. The purpose of the meeting was to draft a petition for the expulsion of the Donauland section. The resulting document accused the Donauland section of a number of offenses, including threatening “German culture in the alpine countries,” attempts to “purchase alpine huts and land through shady financial deals,” and – most importantly – stoking sectarian conflict between the German and Austrian sections in a cynical ploy to split the Alpenverein down the middle.²⁹⁶ The DVB urged their “German brothers in Germany” to “do justice to your own flesh and blood, to we Germans in Austria!”²⁹⁷

The Alpenverein’s central committee faced a dilemma. In private, Pichl had threatened von Sydow that the Austrian and German sections of the DVB would

²⁹⁵ Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 79. “Durch die neue Satzungsbestimmung, wonach der Verein ein unpolitischer ist, soll der Pflege und Förderung nationaler Gesinnung und vaterländischen Geistes durch die nationalen Sektionen nicht entgegengetreten werden.”

²⁹⁶ Denkschrift der Bischofshofener Tagung der österreichischen Sektionen zum Thema Donauland. Central Archive of the Alpine Museum, Munich.

²⁹⁷ Denkschrift der Bischofshofener Tagung. Central Archive of the Alpine Museum, Munich. “Reichsdeutsche Brüder, übet doch endlich Gerechtigkeit gegen euer eigen Fleisch und Blut, gegen uns Deutsche in Österreich!”

withdraw from the Alpenverein if their demands were not met. In public, however, Pichl and his allies would present their secession from the club as the result of Jewish machinations against them. Fearing a German-Austrian split in the Alpenverein, the club's leadership made yet another compromise with the DVB, and this time it was fatal for Donauland:

The alpine behavior of the Donauland section does not provide any evidence that points to expulsion. Yet the movement against the Jewish section has become so powerful that the Alpenverein is threatened with division and disintegration. In order to prevent this, it is the duty of the Alpenverein leadership to resolve these differences, if necessary at the cost of the Donauland section.²⁹⁸

While exonerating Donauland of the charge of alpine misbehavior, the Alpenverein had effectively abandoned its former position of support for Donauland, paving the way for the forces of the DVB to finish their campaign against the Jewish members of the Alpenverein.

In an extraordinary meeting held at the Deutsches Theater in Munich on 14 December 1924, the fate of the Donauland section was the only item on the agenda. Representatives from 247 German sections and 93 Austrian sections were in attendance, and the theater was packed with spectators. In a contentious and passionate debate that lasted for five and a half hours, speakers defending Donauland were cut off, with spectators jeering at and threatening them.²⁹⁹ Pichl and the DVB argued that their petition to expel Donauland was not based on political beliefs or ideology; the DVB was not trying to introduce "politics" into the formally apolitical Alpenverein. Yet the threat that

²⁹⁸ MDÖAV (1924): 215. "Das alpine Verhalten der Sektion "Donauland" biete keine Anhaltspunkte für einen Ausschluß. Die Bewegung gegen die jüdische Sektion sei aber inzwischen zu einem derartigen Umfang angewachsen, daß eine Spaltung und Zersetzung des Alpenvereins drohe. Um das zu verhindern, sei es die Pflicht der Vereinsführung, notfalls auf Kosten der Sektion "Donauland" alle Differenzen zu beseitigen."

²⁹⁹ Amstädter 301.

Donauland represented to the German and Austrian people could not be ignored: “the word “*völkisch*” has no political meaning in Austria.”³⁰⁰ Pichl’s semantic hair-splitting, however, concealed the fact that he had already forced von Sydow’s hand. Mindful of Pichl’s threat to strip away the Alpenverein’s Austrian sections, von Sydow proposed a compromise: Donauland would be expelled from the Alpenverein, but no further petitions regarding the Aryan question would be considered.³⁰¹ In a secret ballot, 190 votes were cast supporting Donauland’s membership in the Alpenverein; 24 delegates abstained from the vote; and 1,663 of those present voted to expel Donauland from the Alpenverein.³⁰²

REACTIONS TO THE DONAULAND AFFAIR

Reaction in both the German and Austrian public was immediate and harsh. The *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* ran the Donauland story with the headline, “Völkisch Agitation – Donauland Expelled!”³⁰³ The *Welt am Montag* lambasted the Alpenverein, a former “paragon of political neutrality,” as a morally corrupt organization: “now that anti-Semitism has taken hold of the Alpenverein, it is falling fast down a slippery slope toward the debasements of *völkisch* demagoguery.”³⁰⁴ The same article accused the Alpenverein of dabbling dangerously in anti-Semitism and *völkisch* nationalism; at the

³⁰⁰ Qtd. in Amstädter 297.

³⁰¹ Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 76.

³⁰² Amstädter 302.

³⁰³ Qtd. in Amstädter 303. “Völkische Hetze – Donauland ausgeschlossen!”

³⁰⁴ Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 244-245. “Einst galt der Alpenverein als ein Muster unpolitischer Neutralität. Seit der Antisemitismus in ihm Einzug gehalten hat, rutscht er rasend rasch auf der schiefen Ebene hinab in die Niederungen des völkischen Demagogentums.”

dedication of a monument to the fallen mountaineers of World War I, the reporter noted that

The monument is an oak-ringed steel helmet. Black-white-red flags [Nazi flags] were the only ones in view, although every good German in Tyrol swears allegiance to the black-red-gold [the German national flag] ... and all this under the cloak of ostensibly impartial, apolitical mountaineering!³⁰⁵

The *Neue Deutsche Alpenzeitung* of Munich lamented the loss of mountaineering's universalist culture. In dark tones, the paper wrote that "there is war once again in the mountains," and that mountaineers had lost a "priceless gem... the camaraderie of the alpine hut":

on the doorsteps of your huts you ask questions about heritage and blood, forgetting spirit and feeling! You research genealogy and the shape of the skull, overlooking the heartbeat and the soul's resonance! What will the end of all this be?³⁰⁶

Another newspaper, *Der Abend*, suggested that bourgeois alpinists were being driven into the socialist mountaineering club, the Naturfreunde, since "upstanding Christians should also avoid these hate-spewing alpine clubs."³⁰⁷

Even the Weimar government in Berlin felt compelled to join the chorus of condemnation. Racism and anti-Semitism stood "in crass contrast to the spirit of our Republic's constitution"; the Alpenverein was plagued with "anti-Semitic tendencies," as anyone who read the "many essays containing open or concealed anti-Semitic attacks" in their publications would soon discover. The government stated that "it is no surprise that

³⁰⁵ Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 244-245. "Das Denkmal stellt einen eichenumkränzten Stahlhelm dar. Als Farben werden ausschließlich Schwarz-weiß-rot verwendet, obwohl in Tirol jeder gute Deutsche zu den großdeutschen Farben Schwarz-rot-gold schwört... Und das alles im Zeichen eines angeblich unparteiischen und unpolitischen Hochtourismus!"

³⁰⁶ Qtd. in Amstädter 303. "... Ihr heftet an die Schwelle eurer Schutzasyle die Frage nach Herkunft und Blut und vergeßt statt dessen auf Geist und Fühlen! Ihr forscht nach Stammbaum und Schädelform und überseht den Herzschlag und den Seelenklang! Was wird das Ziel, das Ende sein?"

³⁰⁷ Qtd. in Amstädter 279.

under these conditions Jewish tourists in the Alps continue to face harassment.” The Alpenverein’s decision in the Donauland affair, in the eyes of the Weimar government, were “almost an incitement to anti-Semitic activity.”³⁰⁸

Jewish mountaineers reacted by forming their own alpine clubs. After its formal expulsion from the Alpenverein, the Donauland section formed the Alpenverein Donauland, which remained open to both Christians and Jews. Some prominent Christian members of the anti-Semitic “Austria” section, such as the famous alpinist Eugen Guido Lammer, joined the Alpenverein Donauland as a symbolic act of defiance.

The DVB’s success in removing the Donauland section, though, had apparently emboldened anti-Semites throughout the Alpenverein; the “Berlin” section, the only remaining section in the Berlin and Brandenburg area that accepted Jewish members, integrated the Aryan clause into their charter shortly after the vote at the Deutsches Theater in Munich. When the “Berlin” section imposed a moratorium on Jewish members, 600 Jews left the section and formed a new club, the Deutscher Alpenverein Berlin.³⁰⁹

The Donauland decision also created general confusion among the Alpenverein sections that had not integrated the Aryan clause into their charters. In Munich, a letter written to the Alpenverein central committee five days after the Donauland vote inquired “on behalf of a number of Jewish friends” what the new policy meant, “since numerous Jewish members in the “Munich” section must make decisions very soon based on your clarification of this question.”³¹⁰ The Alpenverein responded in a letter of 1 February 1925, that “for a long time, all sections of the German-Austrian Alpenverein have

³⁰⁸ Qtd. in Amstädter 306.

³⁰⁹ Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 254.

³¹⁰ Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 246. “Da zahlreiche jüdische Mitglieder der Sektion München von der Beantwortung dieser Frage in allernächster Zeit ihre Entschlüsse abhängig machen müssen...”

complete freedom in the determination of whether or not to incorporate the Aryan clause in their charters.”³¹¹ By deferring that decision-making authority to the local sections, however, the Alpenverein was unintentionally allowing anti-Semitism to take root and fester in the alpine club. In 1927, the “Munich” section also decided to introduce the Aryan clause, which led the expelled Jews to form the *Süddeutscher Alpenverein München*.³¹² Similar events led Jews in Breslau and Leipzig in 1928 to found their own chapters of the newly-formed *Deutscher Alpenverein Berlin*.³¹³

The Jewish alpine organizations in Vienna (*Alpenverein Donauland*), Berlin, Breslau and Leipzig (all branches of the *Deutscher Alpenverein Berlin*) banded together under the banner of the *Alpenverein Donauland*. These Jewish mountaineers dedicated themselves to the task of building their own alpine huts. After all, the Donauland vote had encouraged rapidly worsening anti-Semitic harassment in the Alps. In 1927, the Austrian press reported that anti-Semitic placards were still on display in the alpine huts, “where unabashed hatred is on full display, where the path to the hut is marked with swastikas, where the huts themselves are covered in rows of anti-Semitic pronouncements – for peace-loving people, there is nothing to see there.”³¹⁴ Rather than subject themselves to such ill treatment, the members of the new Jewish alpine clubs purchased land in the Zillertaler Alps and built the Friesenberghaus from 1928 to 1930. The *Donauland-Nachrichten* described the new hut as follows: “... let their feelings of

³¹¹ Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 248. “Sämtliche Sektionen des Deutschen und Oesterreichischen Alpenvereins besitzen seit langem volle Freiheit in ihren Satzungen den Arierparagraphen aufzunehmen oder nicht.”

³¹² Amstädter 304.

³¹³ Amstädter 306.

³¹⁴ Qtd. in Amstädter 310. “Aber dort, wo der Haß unverfroren plakatiert, wo der Anstieg zur Schutzhütte durchs Hakenkreuze markiert, wo die Schutzhütte selbst mit antisemitischen Radaukundmachungen beklext wird, dort haben friedliebende Elemente nichts zu sehen.”

hatred come to open violence ... They threw us out of their placard-covered huts into our own well-built house.”³¹⁵ It was a short-lived triumph.

Before the Nazi seizure of power in 1933, there were repeated public condemnations of the increasingly virulent anti-Semitism encountered in the Alps. When, in 1930, the German-Austrian Alpenverein absorbed the *Österreichischer Gebirgsverein* and the *Österreichischer Touristen-Klub*, the left-liberal newspaper *Der Tag* described the new club as a

unified anti-Semitic alpine front. These developments, which have been going on for years and have poisoned our life in the mountains to an unheard-of degree, will now find its crowning achievement. ... At hundreds of alpine huts, people will now experience an event straight from the theater: late in the evening, an exhausted mountaineer or hiker, tired to the point where his health and life are in danger, comes into the hut and asks for shelter, only to find something written on the door or walls that tells him to leave or spend the night outside.³¹⁶

These public attacks on the Alpenverein’s anti-Semitism and on the increasingly exclusive admission policies at the alpine huts suggest that, on the eve of 1933, the situation in the Alps had already significantly deteriorated.

When the Nazis came to power in Germany, the *Deutscher Alpenverein Berlin* immediately came under attack. In 1934, the Nazi government forced the club to remove the “German” from its title and rename itself the “*Verein der Alpenfreunde*.” Once the club had registered under its new name with the authorities in Berlin-Charlottenburg, the Friesenberghaus was transferred to the *Alpenverein Donauland* in Vienna. This proved to

³¹⁵ Qtd. in Amstädter 304. “... mögen sie ihre Haßgefühle bis zur offenen Gewalt schreiten lassen ... Sie haben uns aus ihren plakatgezierten Hütten i’s eigene festgefügte Haus geführt.”

³¹⁶ Qtd. in Amstädter 312. “Antisemitisch-alpine Einheitsfront. Der Prozeß, der schon seit Jahren läuft und unser Bergleben in unerhörtem Maße vergiftet hat, wird nun seine Bekrönung finden. ... Auf Hunderten von Hütten wird man künftighin das Schauspiel erleben, daß abends oder spät nachts ermattete, ja an Gesundheit und Leben gefährdete Bergsteiger oder Wanderer eintreffen und Obdach suchen, daß sie aber an den Türen oder Hausmauern der Schutzhütten eine Inschrift finden, die sie zur Umkehr oder zur Nächtigung im Freien zwingt.”

be a prescient move; a few weeks later, all of the assets of the *Verein der Alpenfreunde* were seized by the Gestapo, and the club was disbanded. A Gestapo report justified the club's dissolution and asset impoundment by claiming that

The Deutscher Alpenverein belongs to the German sports cartel, a Marxist sports organization that masquerades under the banner of the Reich. This club has close relations with the Touristenverein "Die Naturfreunde," which has already been disbanded and declared illegal. The club's dissolution is necessary and so ordered.³¹⁷

Interestingly, the Gestapo's reasoning focused on the Jewish club's relationship with the socialist mountaineering club, the Naturfreunde; nowhere in the police commissioner's order to disband the *Deutscher Alpenverein Berlin* is it written that the club was primarily Jewish.³¹⁸ With the disappearance of the *Verein der Alpenfreunde*, and the forced introduction of the Aryan clause in 1933, Germany's Jews could no longer participate in an alpine organization. When Austria was subsumed in the *Anschluss* with Germany in 1938, Austrian Jews found themselves in the same position.

THE FINAL BLOW – THE ANSCHLUSS, 1938

Even after his alliance had managed to expel the Donauland section, Eduard Pichl continued to push for further measures against the Jews, including fighting the "de-Germanization (*Entdeutschung*) of the children of South Tyrol, rallying to the side of our comrades in the Ruhr, the preservation of German in our institutions of higher learning,

³¹⁷ Qtd. in Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 87. "Der Deutsche Alpenverein gehörte dem Deutschen Sportkartell, einer unter Führung des Reichsbanners stehenden marxistischen Sportorganisation, an. Zu dem bereits aufgelösten und verbotenen marxistischen Touristenverein "Die Naturfreunde" stand er in engen Beziehungen. Seine Auflösung ist danach erforderlich und geboten."

³¹⁸ Zebhauser, *Alpinismus* 256. The peculiar absence of anti-Semitic language may point to concerns among the Gestapo that anti-Semitic rhetoric might be unpopular. Under the anti-socialist laws enacted within the first months of the Third Reich, however, the Gestapo could persecute the Jews by marking them as socialists.

the creation of an Aryan mountain rescue service...”³¹⁹ When the Nazis assumed power in Germany in 1933, however, Austrian anti-Semites, enamored of the Nazi party’s racial politics, began to enact anti-Semitic policies to demonstrate their support of the Third Reich.

When Nazi Germany annexed Austria in 1938, the *Alpenverein Donauland* was immediately disbanded and its assets, including the Friesenberghaus, were seized. The leaders of Austria’s alpine organizations could not contain their *Schadenfreude*. In a triumphant article published in the Alpenverein’s 1938 *Mitteilungen*, the Alpenverein gloated over Donauland’s extinction:

Just when the Jewish club “Donauland” had been swept from the Alpenverein and had found its own independent, self-sufficient life, ... a sister-club was founded in Berlin, comprised of Jewish members who could no longer stay in the Alpenverein’s larger “Berlin” section. This alpine blister swelled right up and called itself – intentionally – the *Deutscher Alpenverein Berlin!* The dark men in the government of the time had nothing to say about this desecration of the honorable name “German,” since they didn’t want to do anything “in crass contradiction to the the spirit of the [Weimar] constitution.” Certainly not. Just damage the spirit of the good German, the Alpenverein and Berlin’s mountaineers. But that was nothing. Jewish bureaucrats and politicians and their allies in the German government just threw all of our complaints, petitions and legal suits against this misuse of the German name into the trash.³²⁰

³¹⁹ Eduard Pichl, “Der Deutschvölkische Bund im DÖAV” *Der Bergsteiger* (1925): 52. “Abwehr der Entdeuschung der Kinder in Südtirol, Kundgebung für die Volksgenossen an der Ruhr und für die Deutscherhaltung unserer deutschen Hochschulen, Schaffung einer arischen Bergwacht...”

³²⁰ *MDÖAV* (1938): 114. “Just als man mit dem jüdischen Verein “Donauland” im Alpenverein aufräumte und er als “Alpenverein Donauland” ein ebenso selbstständiges und nützliches Leben begann, ... tat sich in Berlin ein Schwesterverein auf, bestehend aus jenen jüdischen Mitgliedern, die in den Berliner Sektionen, vor allem in der großen Sektion Berlin selbst, keine Möglichkeit des Bleibens mehr fanden. Diese alpine Blase blähte sich alsbald großartig auf und legte sich – ausgerechnet – den Namen “*Deutscher Alpenverein Berlin*” zu! Gegen diese Schändung des Ehrennamens “Deutsch” hatten die Dunkelmänner in den Ministerien jener Zeit gar nichts einzuwenden, denn sie stand natürlich nicht “im krassen Widerspruch zum Geist der (Weimarer) Verfassung.” Gewiß nicht. Nur zu dem Geist, der gute Deutsche, den Alpenverein und die Berliner Bergsteiger beseelte. Aber das war ja wurscht. Und zynisch wurden von jüdischen Regierungsmännern und ihren ebensolchen Gefolgsleuten in den Ämtern alle Einsprüche, Beschwerden und Vorstellungen, ja gerichtliche Klagen gegen diese Vereinsgründung und ihren unverschämtes Namensmißbrauch behandelt, nein mißhandelt und im Papierkorb verwahrt.”

The Alpenverein presented its anti-Semitic heritage proudly, claiming that they were able to anticipate the anti-Semitism of the Third Reich and thereby prove their loyalty to Hitler and his party.

What an honorable testament to the high-minded ethos of German mountaineers in the Alpenverein, especially for the Ostmark citizens of German Austria... There are few things of which we could be more proud than the influence we have exercised in the offices of various governments – sometimes to the disadvantage of the Alpenverein – with our pan-German position and the corresponding repudiation of the Jews...³²¹

When the Aryan clause was forcibly introduced in the process of Austria's *Gleichschaltung*, the Alpenverein described its path-breaking role in the implementation of anti-Semitic policies. In this account, Pichl became a prescient hero, and the Alpenverein an advocate of racial purity:

Along with the Austrian gymnastics clubs, the Austrian Alpenverein sections were the first to recognize and talk about the fundamental law of racial purity, even before the War. Under the leadership of Eduard Pichl, the chairman of the oldest and largest Alpenverein section, "Austria," we spoke publicly of the Aryan clause and began our campaign.³²²

This retrospective on Pichl suggested that Austria, unlike Germany, had led the charge against Jewish members in the Alpenverein, claiming that "the Jewish question in the Alpenverein was decided here long before it was taken up elsewhere."³²³ Another strident

³²¹ MDÖAV (1938): 113. "Welches Ehrenmal aber für die Gesinnung der deutschen Bergsteiger im Alpenverein, insbesondere für die Ostmärker aus Deutschösterreich ... Es gibt wenig Dinge, auf die wir stolzer sein könnten, wenige aber auch, die in gleicher Weise Ämter und wechselnde Regierungen beeinflussten – zum Nachteil des Alpenvereins beeinflussten – wie diese seine gesamt-volksdeutsche Haltung und seine Ablehnung der Juden, ..."

³²² MDÖAV (1938): 225. "Im Grundsatz der Rassenreinheit waren es neben den österreichischen Turnvereinen die österreichischen Alpenvereinszweige, die zum ersten mal überhaupt, schon vor dem Kriege, in der Öffentlichkeit vom Arierparagraphen reden machten und dann in der ersten Nachkriegszeit, unter Führung Eduard Pichls, des Vorsitzendes unserer ältesten und größten Sektion, Austria, den Feldzug geradezu eröffneten."

³²³ MDÖAV (1938): 112. "Die Judenfrage wurde im Alpenverein aufgerollt und entschieden, lange noch, bevor im Binnenland sich weitere Kreise mit ihr befaßten."

anti-Semite, Julius Gallian, leader of the Alpine Group in the German-Austrian Sports Front, celebrated the expulsion of all Jewish members of every Austrian sports club, including “anyone with any degree of Jewish blood.”³²⁴ And in July 1939, when a guest of honor reviewed the “Jewish question” at the 65th annual convention of the German Alpenverein, he noted with pride “that the Alpenverein became Jew-free (*judenrein*) at just the right time, making enemies in many circles that now realize the errors of their former thinking.”³²⁵ Austria’s Jewish mountaineers, like Germany’s four years earlier, were effectively excluded from both alpine organizations and the Alps.

³²⁴ MDÖAV (1938): 93.

³²⁵ MDÖAV (1939/1940): 4. “... daß der Alpenverein mit selbstverständlicher Konsequenz sich rechtzeitig judenrein gemacht hat und sich mit dieser Maßnahme nach damaligen Begriffen auch mit verschiedenen Kreisen verfeindete, die das heute einsehen.”

Chapter 5: “Hand in Hand durchs Fels und Land”: Socialism in the Mountains

The Alpenverein’s power within the mountaineering culture of Germany and Austria may have been infringed upon by popular culture, but the most significant political challenge to the Alpenverein’s control over the Alps and mountaineering came from the Tourist Club “The Naturfreunde.” Founded in 1895 in Vienna, the Naturfreunde was a working-class organization dedicated to providing workers and their families an opportunity to hike and climb in the Alps. A majority of its founding members came from the nascent Social Democratic movement, bringing the language of class struggle and the vision for an improvement in the living conditions of the working class to the Alps.

The founding members of the Naturfreunde – Georg Schmiedl, Alois Rohrauer and Karl Renner, a young law student who would later become Chancellor of the Austrian Republic – conceived of their mission as the facilitation of equal access to Alpine recreation. The middle classes, with their higher earnings and paid vacation time, were able to enjoy their leisure in ways that remained inaccessible to the working class.

While the Viennese bourgeoisie spent their leisure time in the spa and health resorts around the Rax and the Semmering mountains, traveled to seaside resorts and climbed mountains in the Alps, the working class suffered hardship and unimaginable misery. On the outskirts of the city, there arose new industrial districts, and thousands of working-class families moved from the countryside to Vienna with the hope of finding work. They lived in one-room apartments, eight to ten people, in narrow streets and alleyways and in tenements. The workday lasted from 12 to 16 hours, and on Saturdays, the workday lasted until at least 4 o’clock in the afternoon. There were no vacations.³²⁶

³²⁶ Nemeč Zephyrin and Dayer Reinhard, “Eine Idee umspannt die Welt,” *90 Jahre, Mit den Naturfreunden in eine lebenswerte Zukunft! Festschrift “Der Naturfreund”* (1985) iv. Qtd. at Amstädter 181. “Während die Bürger von Wien ihre Freizeit in den Kur- und Erholungsgebieten rund um die Rax und den Semmering verbrachten, in die Sommerfrische ans Meer führen und die Berge in den Alpen erstiegen, herrschte in der Arbeiterschaft Not und unvorstellbares Elend. In den Vorstädten entstanden neue Industriebetriebe, und tausende Arbeiterfamilien zogen vom Land nach Wien, in der Hoffnung, dort Arbeit zu finden. Sie

The glaring differences between the lives of the bourgeoisie and the proletariat prompted these three men of varied class backgrounds – Schmiedl a schoolteacher, Rohrauer a blacksmith, Renner a law student – to found an organization that could begin to bridge the gap between rich and poor in the Alps.

The Naturfreunde approached the problem of unequal access to the Alps in a manner similar to the strategies of the German working-class movement prior to World War I. As the Germanist Frank Trommler notes, since its beginnings in the mid-nineteenth century, “the German workers’ movement considered itself to be not only an instrument of economic and political but also of cultural and educational emancipation.”³²⁷ In the case of the Naturfreunde, however, the emphasis was placed upon education and culture, ostensibly because the political climate within Austria and Germany made it difficult for citizens to participate in explicitly socialist organizations.³²⁸ The Naturfreunde described themselves as a *Kulturbewegung* (cultural movement) dedicated to educating and uplifting the working class; indeed, as Leopold Happisch, editor of the organization’s monthly publication, *Der Naturfreund*, wrote, “wherever the masses assemble to win better living possibilities, the demand for wages is accompanied by a desire for higher culture.”³²⁹ The organization’s purpose was to

wohnten – meist acht bis zehn Personen – in Zimmer-Küche-Wohnungen, in engen Straßen und Gassen und in Hinterhöfen. Die tägliche Arbeitszeit betrug 12 bis 16 Stunden, an Samstagen mußte in der Regel bis 4 Uhr nachmittags gearbeitet werden. Urlaub gab es keinen.”

³²⁷ Frank Trommler, “Working-Class Culture and Modern Mass Culture Before World War I,” *New German Critique* 29 (Spring-Summer 1983): 57.

³²⁸ The cultural historian Rainer Amstädter suggests that the Naturfreunde strove to downplay their political views because of restrictions on political activity in associational life. “Die Satzung der Naturfreunde verzichtet bei der Gründung vermutlich nicht zuletzt wegen der politischen Restriktionen, die in Österreich wie in Deutschland politischen Vereinen gegenüber galten, auf die Aufnahme politischer Programmpunkte.” Rainer Amstädter, *Der Alpinismus: Kultur, Organisation, Politik* (Vienna: WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1996) 182.

³²⁹ Pils Manfred and Josef Saftner, “Die Naturfreund als Kulturorganisation.” *Festschrift “Der Naturfreund”* (1985): v. Qtd. in Amstädter 183. “Wo immer die Massen sich zusammenschafften zur

improve working-class culture by opening working class eyes to the natural beauty of the Alps, where workers would catch a glimpse of the possibilities that the future could hold: “in the rocks and snow,” a worker could “once again be a human being and see something else, something besides dusty streets and the miseries of the big city.”³³⁰ The Naturfreunde wanted to liberate the minds and senses of the working class through alpine travel, thereby inspiring them to seek and realize better living conditions in the city.

In the German context, the cultural orientation of the Naturfreunde corresponded with the cultural politics of the *Sozialdemokratischer Partei Deutschlands* (Social Democratic Party of Germany, or SPD). Since the late nineteenth century, the SPD had sought to steer working-class culture “from above,” although “most of the cultural organizations [of the working class] were built “from below,” at times without SPD support and at times even to the unconcealed displeasure of the SPD which in such cases often feared for its own primacy.”³³¹ In this particular case, however, the SPD had little to fear. The Naturfreunde were careful to retain their independence from any one political party, at least until World War I; after WW I, the Naturfreunde positioned itself squarely on the side of the SPD, styling themselves as a social democratic organization, in aggressive opposition to the *Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands* (Communist Party of Germany, or KPD).

In the early twentieth century, the SPD had to adjust its approach to its cultural programs to account for the emergence of various forms of mass entertainment. The

Erringung besserer Lebensmöglichkeiten, da kommt schon neben der Forderung des Lohnes das Verlangen nach höherer Kultur zum Ausdruck.”

³³⁰ Josef Moritz, “Von Padaster zum Ortler,” *Der Naturfreund* (1908): 165. “...in Fels und Firn auf einige Tage wieder einmal Mensch zu sein und etwas anderes zu sehen, als Straßenstaub und Großstadtelend.”

³³¹ Trommler 58.

Naturfreunde were just one example of a flourishing working-class culture that developed in parallel with existing bourgeois culture:

Recent studies of the everyday life of the German working class before World War I have pointed to the dilemma in which the SPD found itself. As the selection of entertainment and pastimes increased with shows, movies, tourism, sport, and big city attractions, the party had to adjust its perception of recreational activities ... The founding of parallel organizations to bourgeois singing and sports societies, libraries and other institutions did not entail the formulation of a specific proletarian approach. The fact that separate institutions existed had to suffice – and was indeed an enormous accomplishment for thousands of workers who neither would have been admitted to bourgeois societies nor would they have wanted to join those organizations.³³²

Yet there were several different choices available to the working class in the years leading up to 1914, not only within the SPD's officially sanctioned organizations, but also in a wide array of associations dedicated to working-class culture. The "alternative culture" of the working class, according to the historian Vernon Lidtke, exploded in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, providing "a striking variety" of opportunities to participate in public life, "including not only recreational, educational, and entertainment clubs but numerous service organizations as well."³³³

The Naturfreunde also prospered in the context of the diverse and flourishing working class culture. As the Naturfreunde chapters in Germany began to grow, a culture of mountaineering parallel to that of the Alpenverein also developed. The Naturfreunde laid claim to the same salutary effects that had long been described by the Alpenverein: the Alps as a curative space, the health benefits of activity and fresh mountain air, the spiritual and emotional elevation experienced in the sublime alpine landscape. The only difference between the Naturfreunde and the Alpenverein were their audiences; while the

³³² Trommler 66.

³³³ Vernon L. Lidtke, The Alternative Culture. Socialist Labor in Imperial Germany (New York: Oxford UP, 1985) 22.

Alpenverein continued to serve the educated upper-middle class, the Naturfreunde targeted the working class.

For the Naturfreunde, the Alps became a geography of social emancipation for the working class, not the site of heroic feats of daring alpinism. The cultural critic Raymond Williams has described working-class culture as “primarily social (in that it created institutions) rather than individual (in particular intellectual and imaginative work)”; in the specific case of the Naturfreunde, this distinction is particularly useful.³³⁴ The Naturfreunde sought to create an institution that would facilitate the education and elevation of an entire social class; the Alpenverein, on the other hand, increasingly valorized individual achievements in mountaineering. Where the Naturfreunde focused on family hikes and the restoration of minds and bodies exhausted by work, the Alpenverein published accounts of daredevil climbers who attempted the most difficult routes possible on major alpine peaks.

These fundamental differences between the Naturfreunde and the Alpenverein are clear in the motivating factors expressed by the founders of the Naturfreunde. The founders sought to liberate the working class not only from the conditions imposed upon them by the capitalist classes, but also from the vices that workers engaged in to escape the misery of their existence:

We wanted above all to tear the workers away from the bars, from dice and card games. We wanted to lead them out of their narrow apartments, out of the fumes of the factory and pubs, into our glorious natural environment, to show them its beauty and its joys. We wanted to enable them to liberate their bodies and minds from the dreary bleakness of everyday existence. We wanted to lead them into the fresh air, the light and the sun.³³⁵

³³⁴ Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1961) 315.

³³⁵ Georg Ledig, “Die Münchner Naturfreunde vor 1933. Zwischen Bergkameradschaft und politischer Spaltung,” *Kaukasus: Die Geschichte der Ersten Deutschen Arbeiter-Kaukasus-Expedition 1932. Münchner und Dresdner Bergsteiger in der Sowjetunion*, eds. Ursula Brunner, Michael Kühn and Georg Ledig (Munich: Buchendorfer Verlag, 2002) 84. “Wir wollten vor allem die Arbeiter losreißen von den

Georg Schmiedl, one of the founding members of the Naturfreunde, also described the organization's purpose as the transformation not only of working-class culture, but also of working-class bodies:

As a member of a large touring club, I noted with regret that our working-class brothers spent their free time in the smoke-filled rooms of local pubs playing cards and drinking games, only to begin their compulsory labor again on Monday or Tuesday, weak "in purse and in soul." The transformation of these working *animals* into working *human beings* seemed essential; we could not lead the struggle for new ideals for humanity with slaves of the beer-glass, of the playing cards and of the bowling lanes.³³⁶

For Schmiedl and his fellow founders Rohrauer and Renner, hiking and mountaineering were physical activities that translated into cultural possibilities; the Naturfreunde "promoted hiking to improve physical fitness and to stimulate an appreciation for the beauties of nature."³³⁷ Schmiedl's corrective for the depredations of the working-class pub offered seemingly boundless opportunities for self-improvement:

On our hiking tours, I wanted to introduce our friends to the variform mysteries of nature. They should experience what the trees and flowers, the insects and butterflies, the jagged rocks and the stones on the streambank had to say to us, what role man plays in the many-wheeled machinery of nature. Their stressed-out limbs, used only for one purpose, should be holistically trained and strengthened; their hearts, oppressed by the worries of their work, the constriction and pettiness of their condition, should be uplifted by the consistency and eternity of nature's laws; they should express their minds through songs and calls, memorialize some

Stätten des Alkohols, vom Würfel- und Kartenspiel. Wir wollten sie aus der Enge ihrer Wohnung, aus dem Dunst der Fabriken und Wirtshäuser hinausleiten in unsere herrliche Natur, sie der Schönheit und der Freude entgegenführen. Wir wollten sie in die Lage versetzen, ihre Körper und ihren Geist freizumachen von dem trüben und öden Allerlei des Alltags. Wir wollten sie der frischen Luft, dem Licht und der Sonne zuführen."

³³⁶ Georg Schmiedl, "Welche Gedanken haben mich bei der Gründung unseres Vereines geleitet?" Der Naturfreund (1920): 69-70. "Selbst Mitglied eines großen Touristenvereines, nahm ich mit Bedauern wahr, daß unsere Arbeitsbrüder ihre freie Zeit in den raucherfüllten Räumen der Gastwirtschaften beim Kartenspiel oder Trinkgelage verbrachten, um, schwach "am Beutel und am Seele," Montag oder Dienstag den gewohnten Frondienst wieder zu beginnen. Diese *Arbeitsstiere* in *Arbeitsmenschen* zu verwandeln, erschien mir stets klarer vor die Seele trat, daß der Kampf um die neuen Menschheitsideale mit den Sklaven des Bierglases, der Spielkarten und der Kegelbahn nicht geführt werden könne."

³³⁷ Lidtke 64.

beautiful moment in pencil and paper – in short, to live *for themselves* for a day, to be an individuated person.³³⁸

Nature would act as a palliative for the ills of the working class, helping them to develop into full human beings. As fellow founder Alois Rohrauer noted retrospectively, spending time in the mountains also played an important role in preserving the working class's only asset – their health:

I want to say one more thing about our efforts and the goal of our club: we want to practice touring, not so much as a sport as a promotion of culture. We want everyone who is gainfully employed, and whose profession and other duties allow enough free time to hike out into the great, majestic cathedral of nature, in order to strengthen themselves in body and spirit and to ennoble the mind. In addition to first-rate muscular exercise, the inhalation of pure air plays an extremely important role in the preservation of health, which for the non-propertied classes is the only capital that they have.³³⁹

This emphasis upon the promotion of working-class culture and the preservation of working-class health was a radical challenge to the Alpenverein's understanding of mountaineering's significance. The Naturfreunde sought to bring the enjoyment of nature, with all of its corollary benefits, to everyone, not just elite mountaineers: the Naturfreunde were “of the opinion that the enjoyment of nature should not be the

³³⁸ Schmiedl 69. “Auf unseren Wanderfahrten wollte ich die Freunde einführen in die Geheimnisse der vielgestaltigen Natur. Sie sollten erfahren, was uns die Bäume und Blumen, was uns der Käfer und Falter, der schroffe Fels und der Stein am Bachesrand zu sagen haben, welche Rolle uns Menschen in der vielrädigen Maschine zukommt. Ihre einseitig angestregten Glieder sollten sie harmonisch üben und stärken, ihre Herzen, bedrückt durch die Sorgen des Berufes, die Enge und Kleinlichkeit der staatlichen Zustände, erheben an der gewaltigen Gesetzmäßigkeit und Stetigkeit der Natur; ausdrücken sollten sie ihres Gemütes Stimmung durch Ruf und Sang, festhalten manch schönes Bild mittels Stift und Platte – kurz einen Tag *sich* leben, *Persönlichkeiten* sein.”

³³⁹ Alois Rohrauer, “Unser Werden,” *Der Naturfreund* (1920): 72. “Ueber unser Streben und das Ziel unseres Vereines will ich noch einiges sagen: Wir wollen Touristik üben, weniger als Sport, vielmehr als Kulturförderung. Wir sind bemüht, daß alle, die in irgendeinem Beruf für die Allgemeinheit nützlich tätig sind, ihre freie Zeit, die ihnen Beruf und andere Pflichten übrig lassen, möglichst oft dazu benutzen, hinauszuwandern in den großen, herrlichen Dom der Natur, um sich körperlich und geistig zu kräftigen und das Gemüt zu veredeln. Außer einer vorzüglichen Muskeltätigkeit spielt die Atmung reiner Luft eine äußerst wichtige Rolle zur Erhaltung der Gesundheit, die für die Nichtbesitzenden ihr einziges Kapital ist, welches sie haben.”

privilege of the propertied classes, but rather should be afforded to everyone who works for their bread.”³⁴⁰

Other alpine organizations in Germany and Austria, including the Alpenverein, viewed the Naturfreunde with a mixture of begrudging admiration, bemusement and benign condescension. Writing to the editor of *Der Naturfreund* in 1904, Joseph Donabaum, the chair of the Alpenverein section “Austria,” wrote,

I have no reason to offer false praise, but your publication *Der Naturfreund* alone has secured your organization an honorable place in the ranks of the alpine associations. *Der Naturfreund* is admirably managed and has earned envious recognition...³⁴¹

The editor of the *Österreichischer Alpen-Zeitung*, writing in 1918, described his encounters with Naturfreunde members in the Alps, in a condescending yet sincere tone, as follows:

I had more than a few opportunities to meet these worn out people in the mountains. Their hikes weren't always the best-planned, their equipment was not entirely above reproach, and they overestimated their strength sometimes; but despite all of their troubles and destitution caused by their scarce resources and the little time available to them, they were the most thankful guests and the happiest people at the community table of Nature. Their naive presence and their joy were quite touching to me.³⁴²

³⁴⁰ Rohrauer 72. “Wir stehen auf dem Standpunkt, der Naturgenuß soll nicht ein Privileg der Besitzenden sein, sondern allen zukommen, die durch Arbeit ums Brot sich mühen.”

³⁴¹ *Festschrift Österreich, 50 Jahre Naturfreunde 1895-1945* (Vienna 1945) 17. “Ich habe keinen Grund, Lob zu heucheln, aber durch den “Naturfreund” allein haben Sie Ihrem Verein einen ehrenvollen Platz in der Reihe der alpinen Körperschaften gesichert. Das Blatt ist vortrefflich geleitet und verdient niedbare Anerkennung...” Qtd. in Amstädter 184.

³⁴² Hans Wödl, “Der Naturfreund,” *Österreichischer Alpen-Zeitung* 955 (1918): 112-113. “Es war gar nicht selten, daß ich Gelegenheit hatte, sie in den Bergen zu begegnen, abgearbeitete Leute, die ihre Fahrten nicht gerade am praktischesten einteilten, die in ihrer Ausrüstung nicht ganz tadelfrei waren, die ihren Kräften auch manchmal zu viel zumuteten; aber sie waren trotz aller Mühen und Entbehrung die durch ihre knappen Mittel und ihre kurz bemessene Zeit verursacht waren, am Freitisch der Natur die dankbarsten Gäste und glücklichsten Menschen. Ihr naives Tun und Sichfreuen war für mich geradezu rührend.” Qtd. in Amstädter 194.

WORLD WAR I AND WEIMAR

Such idyllic descriptions of the working class in the mountains were in short supply during the years of World War I. After publishing their thirty-fifth list of war dead, putting the total number of Naturfreunde killed in battle at over one thousand, the club described the “fury of war as the scandal of our times.”³⁴³ Among the many mountaineering organizations that published lists of fallen soldiers, the Naturfreunde were unique in their aggressively critical stance toward the conduct and costs of the war.

After WW I ended in defeat for Germany and Austria, the fragmented and charged political environment of the Weimar Republic began to force the Naturfreunde to decide where they stood on political issues. Although from the beginning the organization had assumed “a position of abstinence from the daily fray of political affairs,” there was a certain division of labor within working-class culture; the Naturfreunde left politics to the SPD, and the economic struggle of the working class to the trade unions and the workers’ movement. This resulted in a political alignment that allowed the Naturfreunde, along with the SPD and the trade unions, to “[welcome and justify] Germany’s entry into the First World War.”³⁴⁴ Although the Naturfreunde consistently sought to limit their sphere of influence to cultural affairs, they were certainly a participant in the wider social, economic, political and cultural struggles of the working class.

The case of the Munich local of the Naturfreunde illustrates in particularly sharp relief how the assumption of an apolitical stance could ensure the organization’s survival and prosperity. In 1905, 50 men answered a call in the *Münchener Post*, a social

³⁴³ Gerald Schügerl, Tradition und Fortschritt. 80 Jahre Naturfreunde Österreich (Vienna 1975) 57. “Kriegsraserei als die Schande unserer Zeit.”

³⁴⁴ Ledig 86.

democratic newspaper, to form the first German branch of the Naturfreunde. Members from two other working-class mountaineering groups, the “Touristenklub Eichenkranz” and the “Alpenklub Halserspitze,” were also there.³⁴⁵ Seven years later, the Munich local had grown from 50 to 1,000 members; in 1920, that number exploded to 3,058, with almost 1,000 applicants in 1919 alone.³⁴⁶

In the spring of 1919, the tenuous formation of a *Räterepublik* (council republic) in Munich pitted socialist revolutionaries against the conservative paramilitary forces of the right. In one short month, the socialists were brutally put down by right-wing extremists. Despite the street battles and intense political atmosphere in Munich, the Naturfreunde did not advocate for either side, maintaining their political neutrality:

We stand before difficult times, an economically impoverished Germany stands on the edge of ruin, the incredibly hard conditions of the peace will slow our economic development for years to come. Food supply and public infrastructure will not get better in the foreseeable future, and the struggle for power in the state won't allow the tumult to die down anytime soon; in short, we must keep our distance from all of the strife and fighting and keep our attentions focused on serving our one cultural task, our one recognized goal: to turn men into real and true friends of nature and humanity.³⁴⁷

The organization's concentration on their “cultural task,” to the exclusion of contemporary political affairs, may have ensured not only their survival, but also – inadvertently – their prosperity.

³⁴⁵ Der Naturfreund (August 1905): 104 and Der Naturfreund (September 1905): 123.

³⁴⁶ Ledig 85.

³⁴⁷ Ledig 87. “Wir stehen vor schweren Zeiten, das wirtschaftlich verarmte Deutschland, steht vor dem Ruin, die ungemein schweren Friedensbedingungen werden unserer wirtschaftliche Entwicklung auf Jahre hinaus hemmen. Die Ernährungs- und Verkehrsverhältnisse werden in absehbarer Zeit nicht besser werden, dazu der Kampf um die Macht im Staat wird die Gemüter so schnell nicht zur Ruhe kommen lassen, kurz von all dem Zank und Streit wollen wir uns ferne halten, um nur einer Kulturaufgabe zu dienen, unser einmal erkanntes Ziel, aus Menschen, echte und wahre Natur- und Menschen-freunde zu machen, zu verwirklichen.”

In 1920, the Munich group of the Naturfreunde was given permission to take over the operation of the Hochkopfhäuser am Walchensee, a set of royal Bavarian hunting cottages on a beautiful lake. This caused the Naturfreunde to take a slightly more positive stance on the events of 1918/1919 and to entertain the possibility that the Weimar Republic might hold a more promising future in store than they had previously believed:

The revolution washed away a great many boundaries that formerly stood in the way of the alpine movement. Some valleys and some beautiful places in the mountains became accessible to the general public, thanks to the complete political transformation of the country.³⁴⁸

The end of the constitutional monarchy had enabled the transfer of some former royal properties into the hands of private organizations and municipal authorities. Former hunting grounds became natural parks. Although the Naturfreunde were not predisposed to participate in politics, they were certainly open to propitious developments.

By the end of the 1920s, the Munich local had the most dormitories (*Unterkunftshäusern*, 6) and skiing huts (*Schihütten*, 15) of all of the Naturfreunde chapters.³⁴⁹ All of the organization's locals enjoyed growth in membership, property acquisition, construction and trail development in the 1920s. Writing before WW I, Xavier Steinberger of Nürnberg had noted that, while their Austrian and Swiss "Wandergenossen" had already begun building huts before the German chapters of the Naturfreunde, the German chapters realized that this was an important element for the club's further expansion.

Since circumstances before World War I had already given us several reasons to promote efforts to build huts, we will need to get started as soon as peace has

³⁴⁸ Ledig 87. "Die Revolution hat auch in der alpinen Bewegung vieles hinweggeräumt, was hemmend im Wege gestanden. Manches Tal, manch schöner Platz in den Bergen, wurde durch die politische Umwälzung der Allgemeinheit zugänglich."

³⁴⁹ Ledig 85-86.

returned to the countryside, either by constructing our own huts or leasing suitable properties, in as many local chapters as possible.³⁵⁰

Xavier Steinberger also recognized that the Naturfreunde needed to build their own huts and lodges in order to ensure the organization's independence. By providing an alternative to the existing huts and lodges, most of which were owned by the Alpenverein, the Naturfreunde could offer accommodations that were affordable on a working family's budget: "If we want to make our hiking tours less dependent on visiting stores and shops – and I take this for granted – there is no better way than to build our own overnight lodges."³⁵¹ By owning their own properties, the Naturfreunde could also create a social space for the working class in the primarily middle-class context of alpine tourism.

The Naturfreunde were also reacting against the increasingly exclusionary measures of the Alpenverein. As early as 1906, the Alpenverein had doubled its rates for non-members.³⁵² Pressed by the increasing demands placed on it by the rapidly growing tourism industry, the Alpenverein was backing away from its original universalist credo and refining who would be welcome in the huts:

This is a kind of self-protection for our club members, and it is our duty to care for them first and foremost. We are not closing our huts; I must rebut that

³⁵⁰ Xavier Steinberger, "Naturfreunde und Hüttenbau," *Der Naturfreund* (1918): 69-70. "Haben die Verhältnisse vor dem Krieg uns schon öfters Anlaß dazu gegeben, die Bestrebungen des Hüttenbaues zu fördern, so werden wir, sobald der Frieden in die Lande gekehrt ist, erst recht darangehen müssen, in möglichst vielen Ortsgruppen Landheime entweder durch Bau oder Pachtung von geeigneten Landhäusern zu errichten."

³⁵¹ Steinberger 69. "Wollen wir unsere Wanderungen noch mehr wie bisher vom Besuch der Wirtschaften unabhängig machen – und ich setze dies voraus – so gibt es hiezu kein besseres Mittel, als selbst für geeignete Unterkunftgelegenheit zu sorgen."

³⁵² *MDÖAV* (1906): 243. "Bei Feststellung der Hüttengebühren gilt als Grundsatz, daß Hüttenbesucher, welche dem D.u.Ö. Alpenverein nicht als Mitglieder angehören, das Doppelte desjenigen Betrags zu entrichten haben, welcher für Mitglieder des D.u.Ö. Alpenvereins festgesetzt ist."

accusation. But our huts are there for our members and it is a just demand that they receive a little more consideration from the club than others.³⁵³

The implementation of such “protective measures” by definition excluded those who could ill afford to pay twice the normal rate, especially the working class. And such policies were sometimes accompanied by outright harassment. In July 1925, an Alpenverein member wrote in an alpine hut register that a group of Naturfreunde from Dresden had left the hut in “the worst imaginable condition,” leading to a year-long exchange of recriminatory letters, not only between the mountaineers, but also between the Naturfreunde and the Alpenverein.³⁵⁴

The Naturfreunde considered such policies to be evidence of class-based discrimination. In 1922, Leopold Heim of Freiburg, writing in *Der Naturfreund*, described how the Alps had been the exclusive province of the propertied classes before the War: “conducting a high-altitude tour was only possible for those worker-tourists that lived in or near the Alps... This has changed a great deal since the introduction of vacation time.”³⁵⁵ The idea that a cultural geography such as the Alps could be owned by any one group of people was repugnant to the Naturfreunde. Noting that each club had staked out their own areas in the Alps, Helm described how the Naturfreunde were different when it came to asserting ownership of the mountains:

³⁵³ MDÖAV (1906): 245. “Es ist das eine Art Selbstschutz für unsere Vereinsmitglieder und für diese zu sorgen ist unsere Pflicht. Wir verschließen unsere Hütten nicht, den Vorwurf muß ich zurückweisen; aber in erster Linie sind unsere Hütten für unsere Mitglieder da und es ist eine gerechte Forderung derselben, daß ... sie auch eine derartige kleine Rücksichtnahme von seiten des Vereins erfahren.”

³⁵⁴ “Achtet auf Anschuldigungen von Mitgliedern,” *Der Naturfreund* (1926): 192.

³⁵⁵ Leopold Heim, “Der Alpinismus und wir Naturfreunde,” *Der Naturfreund* (1922): 55. “Die Alpen waren bis kurz vor dem Krieg die fast ausschließliche Domäne der besitzenden Klassen. Die Ausführung von Hochtouren war nur jenen Arbeitertouristen möglich, die in den Alpen oder in deren Nähe ihren Wohnsitz hatten ... Das hat sich bedeutend geändert, seit die meisten Berufsarbeiter bezahlte Urlaube bekommen.”

The German-Austrian Alpenverein, like the Swiss Alpine Club and other similar clubs, has chosen to focus exclusively on alpine areas; the Black Forest Club, the Swabian Alb Club and other local associations concentrate on the lower mountains; and in the flatlands other hiking clubs go about their business. But the touring club “Die Naturfreunde” covers all of these areas; our field of work is literally the entire world; our members hike in the high mountains as in the flatlands, in Norway, or in the Californian outback.³⁵⁶

Such statements were probably rhetorical compensations for the imbalance of power and resources that separated *bürgerliche* alpine clubs from the working-class Naturfreunde; it was highly unlikely, for example, that working-class members of the Naturfreunde were traveling to California in the 1920s for the exclusive purpose of hiking. Yet these international ambitions corresponded with the international political rhetoric of left-wing movements in Germany, and as German culture began to be pulled apart at the seams by political violence during the Weimar Republic, the Naturfreunde were caught in the middle.

BETWEEN REFORM AND REVOLUTION

The Naturfreunde were caught within the tensions developing between the reformist and revolutionary tendencies on the left. While SPD politicians urged the working class to take the reformist path, seeking to create political change within the democratic framework of the Weimar Republic, KPD politicians urged workers to prepare for the staging of a full-blown communist revolution modeled after the successful Bolshevik revolution of 1917. For the emphatically anti-political Naturfreunde, navigating between reform and revolution was delicate and dangerous work. Nonetheless,

³⁵⁶ Heim 55. “Auf rein alpinem Gebiet liegt das Arbeitsfeld des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins, des Schweizer Alpenklubs und ähnlicher Vereine, im Mittelgebirge das des Schwarzwaldvereins, des Schwäbischen Albvereins und verschiedener mehr lokaler Vereinigungen; in der Ebene vollziehen manch andere Wandervereine ihre Tätigkeit. Der Touristen-Verein “Die Naturfreunde” aber umfaßt alle diese Gebiete, wörtlich genommen ist sein Arbeitsfeld die ganze Welt, denn sowohl im Hochgebirge wie im flachen Lande, in Norwegen wie im kalifornischen Busch führe seine Mitglieder ihre Wanderungen aus.”

the Naturfreunde began to distinguish themselves from the bourgeois mountaineering organizations with increasing frequency and clarity:

The Touring Club “The Naturfreunde” is the international hiking organization of the working people. The club seeks to create a socialist culture. Therefore, it is the duty of all club members to emphasize our mission, in an unmistakable way, at every possible opportunity. When accepting new members, we must ensure that the class alignment of our organization plays a determining role. If non-union applicants are accepted, then we must make sure that they join the appropriate working-class organizations as soon as possible thereafter. Non-union members cannot be elected to leadership positions. Those who belong to bourgeois political parties should not be admitted to the Naturfreunde.³⁵⁷

By applying a political litmus test to their membership, the Naturfreunde sought to ensure class homogeneity within their organization. And this was only the first of many decisions that helped differentiate the Naturfreunde from other hiking and mountaineering associations.

The Naturfreunde also wanted to make clear the differences between mountaineering and the workers’ sport movement, a movement which had developed into a powerful political force during the Weimar Republic.³⁵⁸ Since 1893, the worker’s sports movement had developed in opposition to the largest athletics organization in Germany, the *Deutsche Turnerschaft* (German Gymnastics Association, or DT), an organization that had been steeped in *völkisch* nationalism since its founding days during the

³⁵⁷ Ledig 87-88. “Der T.-V. ‘Die Naturfreunde’ ist die internationale Wanderorganisation des arbeitenden Volkes. Sie strebt eine sozialistische Kultur an. Es ist daher die Pflicht aller Glieder des Vereins, bei jeder sich darbietenden Gelegenheit die Tendenz des Vereins in unzweideutiger Weise zu betonen. Bei der Aufnahme neuer Mitglieder ist darauf zu achten, daß dem Klassenstandpunkt des Vereins Rechnung getragen wird. Werden Unorganisierte aufgenommen, so ist darauf Bedacht zu nehmen, sie baldigst den Organisationen der Arbeiterklasse einzufügen. Zu Funktionären dürfen Unorganisierte nicht gewählt werden. Angehörigen von bürgerlichen Parteien ist die Aufnahme zu verweigern.”

³⁵⁸ Horst Ueberhorst, *Frisch, frei, stark und treu. Die Arbeitersportbewegung in Deutschland, 1893-1933* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1973): 9.

Napoleonic wars.³⁵⁹ In 1898/1899, the worker-athletes were profoundly outnumbered by the gymnasts; the *Arbeiter Turn-Bund* (Worker's Gymnastics Federation, or ATB) had 27,149 members to the DT's 626,512.³⁶⁰ By 1930, however, the ATB had become the largest working-class sports organization in Germany, with 746,000 members to the DT's 1.6 million.³⁶¹ As these numbers reveal, sport had become an immensely popular pastime for many Germans, regardless of class.

The Naturfreunde, however, rejected the idea that mountaineering was a sport. Mirroring similar debates within bourgeois alpinism, the Naturfreunde struggled to distance themselves from other sports, emphasizing the metaphysical qualities of the mountain experience over the simple physical pleasures of sport. One commentator in *Der Naturfreund* described this distinction as follows:

And there is the organization of the *sport* groups, one after another: gymnastics, athletics, football [soccer], cycling, swimming and so on. I don't want to impugn the organizational centralization of these various branches of workers' sport, but we Naturfreunde must constantly remain aware that we are not simply a *sport* club whose members practice their sport on Sundays, like all the other athletes; deeper, more idealistic thoughts and goals drive us to hike and climb.³⁶²

Yet what exactly were these profound thoughts and feelings that made mountaineering different from other sports? Some within the ranks of the Naturfreunde believed that the

³⁵⁹ For more on the history of the gymnastics movement, see George Mosse, The Nationalization of the Masses: Political Symbolism & Mass Movements in Germany from the Napoleonic Wars through the Third Reich (New York: Howard Fertig, 1975): 126-136.

³⁶⁰ Ueberhorst 23.

³⁶¹ Ueberhorst 351.

³⁶² Walter Ludwig, "Die kulturelle Bedeutung der Naturfreundebewegung," *Der Naturfreund* (1921): 41-42. "Da ist zunächst einmal die Einreihung als *Sport*gruppe neben anderen, wie: Turnen, Athletik, Fußballspiel, Radfahren, Schwimmen usw. Ich will die organisatorische Zusammenfassung dieser Arbeitersportszweige durchaus nicht anfechten; doch müssen wir "Naturfreunde" uns stets bewußt bleiben, daß wir nicht bloß einen *Sport*verein bilden, dessen Mitglieder Sonntags ihren Sport wie all die anderen Sportler pflegen, sondern daß uns tiefere und ideellere Gedankengänge und Ziele zum Wandern und Bergsteigen treibe."

key distinction was between physical sport (*Körpersport*) and cultural sport (*Kultursport*), with physical sport as the mere exercise of the body, and cultural sport as exercise for the benefit of the soul. While physical sport represented yet another facet of the increasing specialization and compartmentalization of modern life, cultural sport liberated the working-class athlete from his daily suffering:

Today, the working people have been crammed into mass tenements by the development of industry, cut off from nature. Nature has become increasingly alien to the workers. This is a terrible disadvantage for the health of the people. They do not get enough sun, enough light or the necessary freedom of movement. Many also make their situation worse by engaging in unreasonable ways of living. It is not enough that they perform grueling, repetitive labor year in and year out, spending every day in dusty, poorly ventilated workrooms; they must also spend their free time in smoke-filled damp beer halls and houses of ill repute. It makes no sense that some waste so much strength and energy in this way! Part of their precious life-capital. So live the majority of city dwellers. Instead of recovering spent life-force through recreation and rest, or through healthy activities outside the workplace. Life today demands physical hardiness and above all mental and spiritual strength. The majority of people are suffocating in disinterestedness and laziness. They lack the courage and the strength to liberate themselves from their one-dimensional, deadening way of life. Only a very few know what it means to strive for something higher than the day-to-day demands of life.³⁶³

The dire situation of the working class could be overcome in the mountains, where the metaphor of social ascent would be reified in the physical ascent of the worker-mountaineer:

³⁶³ *Der Naturfreund* (1922): 28. "Das arbeitende Volk ist in der jetzigen Zeit durch die Entwicklung der Industrie in Massenquartieren zusammengedrängt und von der Natur abgeschnitten. Dadurch ist es ihr auch immer mehr entfremdet worden. Für die Volksgesundheit ist das von großem Nachteil. Nicht nur Sonne und frische Luft, sondern auch die nötige Bewegungsfreiheit mangelt. Viele führen auch noch dazu eine unvernünftige Lebensweise. Nicht genug, daß sie jahraus, jahrein ihrer aufreibenden und einseitigen Arbeit nachgehen und Tag für Tag sich in staubigen, sauerstoffarmen Arbeitsräumen aufhalten müssen, findet man sie noch dazu in ihrer freien Zeit in rauch- und dunsterfüllten Bier- und Vergnügungshäusern. Mit welcher Unvernunft vergeudet so mancher große Mengen von Kraft und Energie! Teile seines kostbaren Lebenskapitals. So lebt der Großteil der Stadtmenschen. Statt die durch Arbeit verbrauchte Lebenskraft durch Erholung und Ruhe einerseits, andererseits wieder durch gesunde Betätigung außerhalb des Berufes zu ersetzen. Gerade heute verlangt das Leben von uns körperliche Widerstandsfähigkeit und vor allem auch geistige und seelische Kraft. Die Mehrheit der Menschen erstickt in Interessenlosigkeit und Nachlässigkeit. Es fehlt ihnen der Mut und die Kraft, sich von der einseitigen und verflachenden Lebensweise loszureißen. Das Streben nach etwas Höherem als nur nach den realen Bedürfnissen des Lebens kennen die wenigsten."

Let us flee from our unfree limited existences, into nature, into the mountains, where our eyes are opened to another world. A new recognition will awake in us. Everything that seemed important and real before will suddenly appear as worthless. New, greater and higher virtues lie before us, if we aspire to claim them, because only they are real and of lasting value. And if we learn to love nature, then our senses will not be dominated by the transitory materialism of this life, because nature fills our hearts with something greater and more worthwhile. Thus does the spirit of man strive indefatigably upwards, toward the light, toward truth. This is called culture.³⁶⁴

Although physical sport trained the body, mountaineering as *Kultursport* trained the entire organism, including the mind and soul, and in doing so elevated the individual mountaineer above his or her class. Mountaineering was meant to be an emancipatory event, not just physical exercise.

At times, however, the metaphysical liberation of working-class culture could erupt into demonstrations for political liberation. Despite repeated proclamations of neutrality, the Naturfreunde could not prevent their individual chapters from taking matters into their own hands. In 1922, a gathering of the Naturfreunde's Brandenburg chapter met in Jüterborg, described as "the former stronghold of Prussian militarism."³⁶⁵

The assembly became an overtly political demonstration:

A real freedom festival was celebrated at the marketplace, with a selected order of presentations. Everyone exchanged words and songs and grouped themselves into a glorious wreath formation. In this tiny country town, this great band of hikers, with their song and noise, made no small impression. Hopefully, the

³⁶⁴ *Der Naturfreund* (1922): 29. "Fliehen wir also dem Unfreien und Beschränkten, ziehen wir hinaus in die Natur, in die Berge, eine andere Welt öffnet sich dabei unseren Augen. Eine neue Erkenntnis wird in uns wach werden. Alles, was uns früher wertvoll und echt dünkte, erscheint uns hier auf einmal als wertlos. Neue, größere und edlere Werte liegen vor uns, trachten wir sie zu erwerben, denn nur sie sind echt und von bleibendem Wert. Und haben wir einmal die Natur liebgewonnen, so hängt unser Sinn nicht mehr an den vergänglichen, materiellen Gütern des Lebens, denn die Natur legt uns größere und wertvollere in unser Herz. So strebt der Geist des Menschen unermüdlich aufwärts, empor zum Licht, zur Wahrheit. Kultur heißt man es."

³⁶⁵ *Der Naturfreund* (1921): 94.

demonstrations managed to shed a little light into some of these petit-bourgeois minds (*Spießergehirn*).³⁶⁶

Events such as these illustrate how the political rhetoric employed by the Naturfreunde could result in political action, despite the organization's formal declarations of political neutrality.

The political impartiality of the Naturfreunde, however, was based on a highly nuanced definition of politics. One observer made the paradoxical distinction between the non-political character of the Naturfreunde accomplishments in the mountains and the political effects of their presence in the Alps.

Our opponents accuse us Naturfreunde of bringing politics into the mountains. That is not true. There were already politics in the mountains, long before there was a Naturfreunde movement. The politics were in the huts of the bourgeois alpine clubs; touring was considered the exclusive reserve of the privileged classes. Only the "better" man was allowed to have a sense for the beauties of nature, and humanity was measured by one's income.³⁶⁷

The explicit rhetoric of class conflict, the juxtaposition of the haves and have-nots, was used to describe not only the privilege of traveling within the Alps, but also the interaction of mountaineers with the inhabitants of the Alps. The guides who led bourgeois mountaineers into the Alps were described as a mountain guide proletariat (*Bergführerproletariat*) exploited for their skilled labor:

³⁶⁶ "Die Naturfreunde gegen den Militarismus," *Der Naturfreund* (1921): 94-95. "Auf dem Marktplatz wurde ein förmliches Freiheitsfest mit einer erlesenen Vortragsordnung gefeiert. Lieder und Worte wechselten miteinander ab und reihten sich zu einem prächtigen Kranz. Es machte in dem kleinen märkischen Landstädtchen kein geringes Aufsehen, als die große Schar der Wanderer mit Sang und Klang anmarschierte und wieder abzog. Hoffentlich hat die Demonstrationen gewirkt und in manchem Spießergehirn ist ein Lichtlein aufgedämmert."

³⁶⁷ *Der Naturfreund* (1929): 35. "Man macht uns Naturfreunden von gegnerischer Seite den Vorwurf, daß wir Politik in die Berge tragen. Das ist nicht richtig. Die Politik war bereits in den Bergen, ehe es eine Naturfreundebewegung gab. Die Politik war in den Schutzhütten der bürgerlichen Alpenvereine, denn die Touristik wurde als ein Reservat der bevorrechteten Klasse betrachtet. Nur der "bessere" Mensch durfte Sinn für die Schönheiten der Natur haben und das Menschentum wurde nach der Höhe des Einkommens bemessen."

As long as the “master” was roped together with his guide, bound in life and death, there were no class differences: man and man stood together in hardship and danger. But as soon as this “bond” was dissolved, then the usual social segregation returned, and the social boundaries were put back up again.³⁶⁸

The mountain guides were not the only group to be subjugated under the yoke of capitalism; farmers and alpine villagers were also “contaminated by the spirit of capitalism.”³⁶⁹ When they met fellow hikers who had been taught “from the pulpit and the schoolmaster’s lectern” about the “red ghost of socialism,” the Naturfreunde encountered “evil looks” when their “red flood” first came into the mountains. Yet the Naturfreunde did not engage in the same overt politicization of the alpine villagers, as had their bourgeois counterparts; instead, they let their actions speak for themselves:

We did not let ourselves be distracted and we accomplished pioneering work in the mountains. We didn’t say one word about socialism, and thereby we promoted socialism. We Naturfreunde don’t preach socialism, we live it... And as they got to know us, the farmers discovered that we socialists are also human beings, very accessible people in fact, free of prejudices. We built our Naturfreunde huts, and slowly the “natives” came to trust us, despite all of the aspersions cast at socialism by bourgeois and religious newspapers.³⁷⁰

By living socialism instead of preaching it, the Naturfreunde claimed to have made significant inroads into the topographies of class in the Alps. In the valleys, “where earlier a friendly greeting would rarely elicit even a grumpy “Grüß Gott!”, today the

³⁶⁸ Der Naturfreund (1929): 35. “Solange der “Herr” mit seinem Führer durch das Seil auf Tod und Leben verbunden war, gab es keine Klassenscheidung: Mensch und Mensch standen gemeinsam in Not und Gefahr. Sobald aber die “Bindung” gelöst war, trat die gesellschaftliche Absonderung in ihr Recht: Die sozialen Schranken wurden wieder aufgerichtet.”

³⁶⁹ Der Naturfreund (1929): 35.

³⁷⁰ Der Naturfreund (1929): 35. “Wir haben uns nicht beirren lassen und unsere Pionierarbeit im Gebirge geleistet. Wie haben kein Wort vom Sozialismus gesprochen und dennoch für den Sozialismus Werbearbeit getan. Wir Naturfreunde predigen nicht den Sozialismus, sondern wir leben ihn ... Und die Bauer haben im Verkehr mit uns erfahren, daß wir Sozialisten sozusagen auch “Menschen” sind und sogar sehr umgängliche Menschen, frei von Vorurteilen. Wir haben unsere Naturfreundehäuser errichtet und langsam haben die “Einheimischen” Zutrauen zu uns gefaßt, trotz aller Hetze bürgerlicher und klerikaler Blätter gegen den Sozialismus.”

socialist greeting “Friendship!” has become customary.”³⁷¹ Such statements reveal the degree to which the Naturfreunde considered themselves a political organization, regardless of how carefully they tried to circumscribe the meaning of the term “politics.”

As the Naturfreunde movement grew during the Weimar Republic, there were occasions for both celebration and trepidation. At the thirty-year anniversary festival for the Naturfreunde, the president of the Naturfreunde, Austrian parliament member Karl Volkert, praised the organization for its work on behalf of the working class, pointing out

that the educational drive of the mountaineer to make the masses of the *Volk* ready to enjoy the beauty of nature, and lead them from the banal pleasures of the smoke-filled pub into the mountain experience, is plainly clear. The 200,000 members of the Naturfreunde, with their 182 huts, are proof that our mountaineering organization is an important counterweight to the all-too-materialist character of our time, a counterweight that protects us from the degeneration of what is noble.³⁷²

The Naturfreunde indeed had a great deal to celebrate. Their explosive growth during the 1920s, in both Germany and Austria, had enabled worker-mountaineers to travel to and enjoy the mountain world of the Alps. Yet their success also attracted the attentions of the far right wing in German political culture.

THE COMING STORM: THE NATURFREUNDE AND THE NAZIS

As early as 1923, the Naturfreunde were alarmed by the prevalence of the swastika in the Alps: “we are receiving complaints from all over that the swastika is

³⁷¹ *Der Naturfreund* (1929): 35. “Wo früher ein freundlicher Gruß kaum mit einem mürrischen “Grüß Gott!” erwidert wurde, ist heute der sozialistische Gruß “Freundschaft!” heimisch.” The historian Vernon Lidtke also points out how working-class organizations developed their own forms of greeting and leave-taking: “The Friends of Nature said hello with *Berg frei*, in contrast to the *Berg Heil* of the German Alpenverein.” Lidtke 62.

³⁷² “Jubiläums-Ausstellung des T.-V. Naturfreunde,” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 10 July 1925: 3. “...daß der Erziehungsgedanke des Bergsteigers, die große Masse des Volkes für die Schönheiten der Natur reif zu machen, von banalen Vergnügungen, vom rauchgeschwängerten Wirtshauslokal in das Bergerlebnis einzuführen, verwirklicht, so sind die 200.000 Mitglieder der Naturfreunde mit ihren 182 Hütten ein Beweis mit dafür, daß der allzu materielle Zug der Jetztzeit in unseren Bergsteigervereinigungen ein bedeutendes Gegengewicht erhält, die uns vor einer Verkümmernng des Edlen in uns bewahren soll.”

being painted on and in our huts, on fences, trees, trail signs, stones – in short, wherever it is possible ... there is a swastika.”³⁷³ Despite the aggressiveness of such vandalism, the Naturfreunde urged their membership to ignore the swastika and not to retaliate:

We cannot condone the desire of some of our friends to do something about this. We are not stupid enough to paint another sign next to the swastika. We don't have the time nor the desire to paint over the little swastika. We would like to impress upon our members that they should under no circumstances even touch this symbol of narrowmindedness. The more visible it becomes in the mountains, the more tasteless it will appear.³⁷⁴

Looking the other way could not conceal the fact that a new political wind was blowing, and political developments during the 1920s confirmed again and again that a storm was approaching on the horizon.

Other reports accused the Alpenverein of supporting the Nazis. A photograph published in *Der Naturfreund*, taken during the Easter holiday of 1924, depicted a swastika prominently displayed on the front door of the Alpenverein's Hofpürghütte; the accompanying text informed the reader that “the swastika on the door is not simply painted on a piece of paper, but rather painted with oil paint directly on the door.” The Naturfreunde lamented the fact that “now everyone can see for themselves how far some sections of the Alpenverein have gone.”³⁷⁵ The next edition of *Der Naturfreund* prominently displayed another photograph of an Alpenverein hut, this time with the

³⁷³ “Das Hakenkreuz,” *Der Naturfreund* (1923): 63-64. “Von allen Seiten kommen uns Klagen darüber zu, daß an und in unseren Häusern, an Zäunen, Bäumen, Wegtafeln, Steinen, kurzum, wo es nur möglich ist, ... das Hakenkreuz hingemalt wird.”

³⁷⁴ “Das Hakenkreuz,” *Der Naturfreund* (1923): 63-64. “Dem Verlangen mancher unserer Freunde, dagegen etwas zu unternehmen, können wir nicht entsprechen. Ein anderes Zeichen daneben zu malen, dazu fehlt uns die nötige Dummheit. Das Hakenkreuz zu überstreichen, mangelt uns die Zeit und die Lust. Wir möchten auch allen unseren Genossen dringend raten, dieses Wahrzeichen der Engstirnigkeit auf keinen Fall anzutasten. Je öfter es in unseren Bergen sichtbar wird, desto abgeschmackter erscheint es.”

³⁷⁵ “Politik in den Bergen,” *Der Naturfreund* (1924): 105.

swastika painted under the roofline on the side of the building.³⁷⁶ At the construction site of a new Naturfreunde hut, one member discovered a shingle upon which had been written, “Aryan workers! Don’t build huts for the Jews!”³⁷⁷ A photograph of the shingle was included in the report.

The publication of these photos in *Der Naturfreund* caused outrage in both the Alpenverein and the Naturfreunde. One Alpenverein member sarcastically asked whether “the swastika should be the Alpenverein’s new emblem.”³⁷⁸ After the Alpenverein removed the swastikas from the two huts that had been photographed for *Der Naturfreund*, an observer remarked that the Alpenverein had to do much more than just get rid of the external signs of Nazism.

Even if an assembly decides a hundred times that everything is black and white, and when they declare a hundred times that the term “*völkisch*” does not have any political meaning in Austria, the facts still prove that this is untrue. The swastika is the insignia of these accursed terrorist bands of hired guns, who, in Austria as in neighboring Germany, have stood without interruption in defiance of the rule of law, and have numerous evil murderous deeds on their conscience. Whether the majority of the Alpenverein’s members want to be associated with such people remains questionable.³⁷⁹

This blistering indictment of the Alpenverein’s Nazi sympathies was followed by an equally devastating critique of another letter in which a Berlin Alpenverein section

³⁷⁶ “Politik in den Bergen” 131.

³⁷⁷ “Der Ingrimme unserer Feinde,” *Der Naturfreund* (1924): 159. “Arische Arbeiter! baut den Juden keine Hütten!”

³⁷⁸ “Die Politik in den Bergen,” *Der Naturfreund* (1924): 159.

³⁷⁹ “Die Politik in den Bergen” 159. “Wenn auch hundertmal in einer Versammlung beschlossen wird, daß schwarz weiß sei, und wenn man hundertmal erklärt, daß der Ausdruck “*völkisch*” in Österreich keine politische Bedeutung hätte, so bleibt doch die Tatsache bestehen, daß dies unrichtig ist, daß das Hakenkreuz das Abzeichen ist für wüste Terrorbanden gedungener Desperados, die sowohl in Österreich wie auch in dem benachbarten Deutschland mit dem Gesetz ununterbrochen im Widerstreit stehen, die zahlreiche gemeine Mordtaten auf dem Gewissen haben. Ob der Großteil der Mitglieder des. D. u. Ö. A.-V. mit solchen Banden in Verbindung gebracht werden will, ist fraglich.”

member reported the flying of the Hohenzollern and Habsburg flags in the Berlin section's huts.

The flag of the Hohenzollern and the flag of the Habsburgs, each of the same dynasty that have brought death and perdition upon the whole world, and who have given their people, so gloriously ruled, over to the dishonor and shame of the post-war period. It appears that the leading personalities in the Berlin section [of the Alpenverein] still long for their snappy Willi [Emperor Wilhelm] and their little boy Otto [von Habsburg].³⁸⁰

The purpose of this passionate rhetoric against both Nazism and nostalgic monarchism, according to the Naturfreunde, was to defend itself against accusations that the worker-mountaineers were the ones asserting their politics in the mountains.

And politics were certainly foregrounded in the Alps during the turbulent 1920s. In 1923, Mussolini, the fascist dictator of Italy, declared that all alpine organizations in South Tyrol were banished, and that all assets located in South Tyrol were now the property of the Club Alpino Italiano. The Naturfreunde, along with the Alpenverein, lost properties and local chapters of their club, yet they remained optimistic that their work would continue: "the Naturfreunde will survive Mussolini, just like they have survived others before."³⁸¹ Yet the Naturfreunde had gravely underestimated the fascist threat.

The Naturfreunde experienced ever more frequent harassment during the 1920s. They warned their members to avoid innkeepers and business owners affiliated with the "home guard" (*Heimwehr*), a loosely-organized Austrian nationalist paramilitary force similar to Germany's infamous *Freikorps*. Such innkeepers were reputed to have

³⁸⁰ "Die Politik in den Bergen" 159. "Die Fahne der Hohenzollern und die Fahne der Habsburger, jener beiden Geschlechter, die Tod und Verderben über die ganze Welt gebracht haben und die außerdem noch die von ihnen so glorieus regierten Völker dem Schimpf und der Schande der Nachkriegszeit überantwortet haben. Es scheint, daß wenigstens die leitenden Personen der Sektion Berlin sich noch immer nach dem "forschen" Willi und dem Knaben Otto sehnen."

³⁸¹ "Mussolinis Heldentat," *Der Naturfreund* (1923): 109. The Naturfreunde lost one hut and a few local chapters; Alpenverein losses were much more significant. "Die Naturfreunde werden auch das System Mussolinis überleben, so wie sie anderes schon überlebt haben."

complained about “the red rabble of the workers,” and the Naturfreunde urged their members “not to take our money into such a place of business.”³⁸² And these incidents were not limited to Austria; the Naturfreunde reported similar incidents in Germany, leading them to call on their German chapters to avoid “home guard sympathizers and swastika innkeepers.”³⁸³

Insults were soon to be the least of worries for the Naturfreunde. An incident on the border between Austria and Italy illustrates how the increasing politicization of the Alps could have serious consequences:

Two Naturfreunde comrades were on a tour in September in the area around the Röthlspitze. Because their hike was delayed and a descent to the Klara hut wasn't advisable due to the rapidly approaching darkness, they descended to the Lenkjöchhl hut, which stands on Italian territory. The innkeeper, a fascist, had them arrested, and finally the two of them were dragged off to Kasern and then further on to Brunneck. They were treated like criminals, thrown into damp cellars, given nothing to eat and subjected to highly embarrassing examinations. One hiker got off easy at his trial, but the other had to sit in jail for 30 days. Now it was certainly a misdemeanor for both of these Naturfreunde to cross the border without their passports, especially the Italian border. But the way that the Italian authorities handled these two hikers – who obviously wanted to climb some mountain peaks, not undermine Mussolini – is an outrage. Avoid this fascist country – it doesn't make sense for working people to spend their hard-earned vacation money there.³⁸⁴

³⁸² “Meidet Heimwehrwirte!” Der Naturfreund (1929): 230.

³⁸³ “Wirte, die keine Arbeiter als Gäste wollen,” Der Naturfreund (1928): 186. “Heimwehrprotektoren und Hakenkreuzwirten...”

³⁸⁴ “Meidet Mussolinien!” Der Naturfreund (1928): 42. “Zwei Vereinsgenossen unternahmen im September eine Urlaubstour im Gebiet der Röthlspitze. Da sich ihr Marsch verzögerte und der Abstieg zur Klarahütte wegen einbrechender Nacht nicht ratsam war, stiegen sie zur Lenkjöchhlhütte ab, die schon auf italienischem Gebiet steht. Der Wirt, ein Faschist, ließ sie sofort anhalten, und schließlich wurden beide nach Kasern und weiter nach Brunneck verschleppt. Überall behandelte man sie als Verbrecher, warf sie in feuchte Kellerlöcher, gab ihnen nichts zu essen und stellte hochnotpeinliche Untersuchungen an. Der eine Tourist kam dann bei der Gerichtsverhandlung leichter davon, der andere mußte 30 Tage absitzen. Nun war es zweifellos von den beiden Naturfreunden ein Vergehen, ohne Paß die Grenze zu überschreiten, noch dazu die italienische. Die Unverschämtheit der italienischen Behörden liegt aber in der Art und Weise, wie sie diese Touristen, deren Absichten offensichtlich nach Berggipfeln zielten und nicht nach den Niederungen Mussoliniens, behandelten. Darum meidet das Faschistenland, es verdient nicht, daß arbeitende Menschen ihre sauer ersparten Urlaubsgroschen dort anbringen.”

The arrest and eventual release of these two hikers also begs the question of whether Alpenverein members would have experienced similar treatment, or whether the two men were harassed because of their Naturfreunde memberships. And the Naturfreunde were incensed about such incidents at the border. A notice in *Der Naturfreund* called for anyone who had experienced “unpleasant or arbitrary” treatment at the hands of the Italian authorities to report their experiences to Vienna. The notice also mentioned that mountaineers coming from Yugoslavia, Austria, Switzerland and France had been ill-treated by Italian border officials.³⁸⁵ And unpleasantries at the border were frequently followed by uncomfortable situations inside South Tyrol. Conditions became so antagonistic that the Naturfreunde recommended that their members avoid the Dolomites and South Tyrol at all costs, citing price gouging and mistreatment at the hands of unscrupulous innkeepers.³⁸⁶

Inside the borders of Germany and Austria, the Naturfreunde found themselves beset on all sides in the public sphere, by newspapers, reactionary politicians and conservative organizations. One particular incident, covered in the press and in the publications of the Naturfreunde and the Alpenverein, sheds light on how negative press coverage increasingly presented the Naturfreunde as a radical organization of dishonorable persons. On 31 March 1928, three Naturfreunde and one German member of the Alpenverein were skiing together near the Groß-Venediger in Austria when an avalanche swept all four skiers away. The three Naturfreunde managed to dig themselves out, and they attempted to save their German friend. Yet the conservative *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* reported the story as follows:

³⁸⁵ “Mussolinien und die Touristen,” *Der Naturfreund* (1928): 236.

³⁸⁶ “Faschistische Preispolitik,” *Der Naturfreund* (1928): 236.

The three survivors uncovered the victim's face in the snow and then left the scene. They did not report the incident until the following day... The autopsy revealed that the cause of death was not asphyxiation; the victim in fact froze to death. Thus it became clear that, at the time the three survivors left him, the victim was still alive; he froze to death during the night after hours of martyrdom... A bit of effort from the survivors, who all belong to the social democratic club "the Naturfreunde," and this fellow from Nürnberg could have lived.³⁸⁷

Within the culture of mountaineering, one of the most damaging accusations was of dishonorable conduct in the mountains, and one of the largest newspapers in Munich had slandered the Naturfreunde. The Naturfreunde responded angrily to these charges, accusing the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* of unprofessional and calumnious journalism. The Naturfreunde's own investigation revealed that the autopsy physician had determined the cause of death to be asphyxiation, not freezing to death. As *Der Naturfreund* perceptively noted, "the entire presentation of this martyred hero only served as a thinly veiled attack" on the Naturfreunde.³⁸⁸

The report in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten* was also picked up by the Alpenverein. A notice in the Alpenverein's *Mitteilungen* condemned the three survivors, claiming that they had acted without honor in an emergency situation:

The man from Nürnberg had one hand free. When his face was uncovered in the snow, the three survivors believed that they were looking at a corpse, and they left, *without any attempts at resuscitation*, descending down to the hut... The rescue expedition met at the scene of the accident on April 2 at 9 a.m. After a little bit of shoveling, the corpse was free of the snow. The corpse's appearance showed that it was almost certain that immediate attempts at resuscitation could have saved the victim's life. The thoughtlessness of the inexperienced survivors

³⁸⁷ "Eine zusammengebrochene Verleumdung," *Der Naturfreund* (1928): 271. "Die drei Geretteten machten das Gesicht des Verunglückten frei und gingen dann davon. Erst am nächsten Tag machten sie die Anzeige ... Bei der Obduktion stellte sich heraus, daß der Tod nicht infolge Erstickens, sondern infolge Erfrierens eingetreten ist. Es war also klar, daß der Verunglückte zu der Zeit, als sich die drei andern von ihm entfernten, noch lebte und nach stundenlangem Martyrium im Laufe der Nacht erfroren ist... Ein paar Spatenstiche durch die Geretteten, die dem sozialdemokratischen Verein "Naturfreunde" angehören, hätten den Nürnberger am Leben erhalten können."

³⁸⁸ "Eine zusammengebrochene Verleumdung" 271.

caused this man's death... This sad accident proves once again that far too many people – especially in winter – go into the mountains without having the least right to do so, because they have absolutely no knowledge of how a mountaineer should behave in situations of emergency and danger.³⁸⁹

The Alpenverein's representation of the incident depicted the Naturfreunde as cowardly amateurs who did not belong in the mountains, while also implicitly criticizing the Naturfreunde for not preparing their members for the winter dangers of the Alps.

The public castigation of their three members prompted the Naturfreunde to defend their own. The Naturfreunde complained vigorously not only about the public libel against the three Naturfreunde, but also about the collusion of the Alpenverein:

Thanks to this political witchhunt, the honor of these three honorable, upstanding men and mountaineers has suffered terribly; they have been tarnished with the terrible accusation of poor mountain camaraderie (*Bergkameradschaft*). And despite all evidence to the contrary, our political opponents remain motivated by devilish hate, lurking about with envy and fear. It is clear that all of these religious, patriotic and swastika-ridden rags were more than happy to republish the notice that appeared in the *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*. – It is most astounding, however, that the *Mitteilungen* of the German-Austrian Alpenverein published their one-sided story, without waiting for any further reports or weighing the evidence; all of this really smacks very much of meddling.³⁹⁰

³⁸⁹ MDÖAV (1928): 133. "Vom Nürnberger war eine Hand frei. Als sein Gesicht freigelegt war, glaubten die drei eine Leiche vor sich zu haben und gingen, *ohne Wiederbelebungsversuche* anzustellen, zur Hütte weiter... Die Rettungsexpedition traf am 2. April, 9 Uhr vormittags, an der Unglücksstelle ein. Mit wenigen Schaufelstichen war die Leiche freigelegt. Der Augenschein lehrte, daß fast sicher bei sofortigen Wiederbelebungsversuchen das Leben des Nürnbergers gerettet werden hätte können. Die Kopflosigkeit der Unerfahrenen hat dies Menschenopfer verursacht... Dieses Unglück ist wieder ein trauriger Beweis, daß viel zu viel Leute – besonders im Winter – ins Hochgebirge gehen, die nicht die geringste Berechtigung hiezu haben, weil ihnen jegliche Grundlage der Kenntnisse bergsteigerischen Verhaltens in Not und Gefahr fehlt."

³⁹⁰ "Eine zusammengebrochene Verleumdung" 272. "Der politischen Hetze zuliebe werden drei ehrliche, anständige Menschen und Bergfreunde schwerst in ihrer Ehre verletzt, man zeilt sie mit dem furchtbaren Makel der schlechten Bergkameradschaft. Und das alles wider besseres Wissen, nur aus teuflischem Haß gegen den politischen Gegner, den man mit Neid und Furcht umlauert. Es ist klar, daß alle Sudelblätter klerikaler bis treuteuscher, hakenkreuzlerischer Verfassung mit Wonne die Notiz der "Münchner Neuesten Nachrichten" brachten. – Sehr erstaunlich ist es aber, daß auch die Mitteilungen des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins, ohne alle Berichte abzuwarten und abzuwägen, eine einseitige Kritik abgeben, die wirklich allzusehr nach Schreibtischweisheit riecht."

While it is unclear whether the Naturfreunde were able to defend their integrity in the public sphere successfully, there is little doubt that they were coming under increasing attack. In 1930, *Der Naturfreund* admonished its readership to read the workers' press, claiming that "the enemies of the working class have armed themselves with the powerful measures available to them, among them so-called "public opinion" and the "free press.""³⁹¹ The Naturfreunde also wrote in the language of a siege mentality to describe the inroads that popular entertainment had made into their *Kulturbewegung*, identifying the polluting, pernicious forces of capitalism as the driving force in the anesthetization of the working class:

Hiding behind the mask of a people-friendly stance, innumerable dailies, illustrated newspapers and other entertainment garbage have found their way into the houses and minds of the working population. Out with these insidious enemies! The socialist press belongs in the house and minds of the workers and the intelligent white-collar employees.³⁹²

The increasing pressures of an antagonistic press and the distractions of popular culture contributed to a profound sense of persecution among the Naturfreunde. And the rise of the Nazi movement in the late 1920s added further fuel to the fire.

The Naturfreunde had been suspicious of the Nazis since 1923, when the first swastikas began to appear in the Alps. By 1931, however, the growing strength of the Nazi movement gave the Naturfreunde cause for genuine concern. The Naturfreunde

³⁹¹ "Leset die Arbeiterpresse!" *Der Naturfreund* (1930): 235.

³⁹² "Leset die Arbeiterpresse!" 235. "Unter der Maske volksfreundlicher Haltung haben unzählige Tageszeitungen, illustrierte Blätter und anderer Unterhaltungsschund Eingang in das Haus und leider auch in das Hirn der werktätigen Bevölkerung gefunden. Hinaus mit den heimtückischen Feinden! Ins Haus und ins Hirn des Arbeiters und des denkenden Angestellten gehört die sozialistische Presse." The Naturfreunde were not unique in this regard; the SPD and the Catholic church had long tried to stem the tide of what they called *Schundliteratur*, or pulp fiction. Despite attempts to set up working-class libraries, statistics showed that workers preferred the same reading material as lower-middle and middle-class readers. The SPD and the Catholic church tried to direct workers towards more educational materials, but they seemed to have preferred the same works that were popular in the public libraries. See Trommler 65. See also: Ronald Fullerton, "Creating a Mass Book Market in Germany: The Story of the 'Colporteur Novel,' 1870-1890" *The Journal of Social History* 10.3 (Spring 1977): 265-283.

were particularly worried that the National Socialist German Worker's Party (the Nazi party) was successfully masquerading as a workers' movement; as one commentator acidly noted, "what right the national socialists have to call themselves a workers' party has long been a mystery to us."³⁹³ Hitler's overtures to the working class, according to the Naturfreunde, were meant to divide the working class and break down the unity of their social and political organizations. To give the lie to the Nazis' promises, *Der Naturfreund* published a letter written by the Nazis to the chairman of the Naturfreunde chapter in Frankfurt.

I want to let you know, my highly honored Sir Comrade, that we are going to destroy you and your pack of proles for the contamination of the Taunus through your so-called Naturfreunde houses. Don't think you're so great with your barracks ... where the red rooster crows in Oberreifenberg, Brombach and Sandplacken. Your dirty pack of proles belongs in the factories, the slaughterhouses and at the pig's trough, but not in God's free nature. Germany, awake, awake, awake!³⁹⁴

The Naturfreunde urged their readership to "keep their eyes open," to "help protect the Naturfreunde."³⁹⁵ Yet there was little that could be done when, in 1933, Hitler became Chancellor and the Nazis assumed control in Germany.

After the Nazis came to power, the German chapters of the Naturfreunde tried to align themselves with the new state. On 18 March 1933, the German leadership of the Naturfreunde announced its withdrawal from "the tourist club "the Naturfreunde," with

³⁹³ "Der Nazi als Arbeiterfreunde," *Der Naturfreund* (1931): 73.

³⁹⁴ "Der Nazi als Arbeiterfreunde" 73. "Ich mache Sie darauf aufmerksam, sehr geehrter Herr Genosse, daß wir Ihnen und dem übrigen Proletenpack die Verseuchung des Taunus durch die sogenannten Naturfreundegehäuser versalzen werden. Tut euch nicht so groß mit euren Baracken ... kräht der rote Hahn in Oberreifenberg, in Brombach, am Sandplacken. Ihr dreckiges Proletenpack gehört in die Fabriken, in die Zuchthäuser und an den Schweinetrog, aber nicht in Gottes freie Natur. Deutschland, erwache, erwache, erwache!"

³⁹⁵ "Der Nazi als Arbeiterfreunde" 74.

headquarters in Vienna.” On 9 May 1933, the same leadership announced its allegiance to the Nazi state:

Continuing our traditional affirmation of the state, the Naturfreunde movement will support the national and social state, and, according to a resolution passed on 18 March 1933, we are prepared to offer honest, positive cooperation with the state.³⁹⁶

Along with the Nazi government in Berlin, the Bavarian Ministry of the Interior remained unconvinced; no matter what resolutions the Naturfreunde might draft, they were doomed. On 17 June 1933, the Touristenverein “Die Naturfreunde” was abolished:

The tourist club “Die Naturfreunde” is a Marxist organization. Even though the club has declared its readiness to cooperate with the nation, such a club, whose members have been thoroughly indoctrinated as Marxists, cannot be trusted, despite such declarations... The State Ministry of the Interior has therefore decided that the Naturfreunde will not be included in the new order.³⁹⁷

The dissolution of the Naturfreunde proceeded quickly. The Naturfreunde lodges and huts were closed, and some of the properties were occupied by SS and SA troops, although the Naturfreunde in Austria were having a hard time getting any clear news from Germany.³⁹⁸ It was clear, however, that the days of the Naturfreunde were numbered.

In the last edition of *Der Naturfreund*, published in 1934, the club surveyed the devastation of their organization. The Naturfreunde expressed their astonishment at the speed and thoroughness of the destruction, that “the organization of the Naturfreunde has

³⁹⁶ Ledig 89. “Staatsbejahend wie bisher steht die Naturfreunde-Bewegung auch dem neuen nationalen und sozialen Staat gegenüber, und ist nach einer EntschlieÙung (...) vom 18. März 1933 zu ehrlicher, positiver Mitarbeit für Volk, Staat und Nation bereit.”

³⁹⁷ Ledig 90. “Der Touristenverein ‘Die Naturfreunde’ ist eine marxistische Organisation. Wenn der Verein auch nunmehr seine Bereitwilligkeit zur Mitarbeit im nationalen Sinne erklärt, so kann doch bei einem Verein, dessen Mitgliederstand durchweg marxistisch eingestellt war, auf eine solche Erklärung nichts gegeben werden. (...) Das Staatsministerium des Innern hat daher (...) von dem Versuch einer Eingliederung des Vereins ‘Die Naturfreunde’ in die staatliche Ordnung abgesehen.”

³⁹⁸ “In Deutschland,” *Der Naturfreund* (1933): 113.

been laid to waste in Germany, the product of decades of hard cultural work.”³⁹⁹ 250 huts had been occupied or destroyed. Members remaining in Germany lived under constant threat of physical violence in an oppressive atmosphere of fear:

Somebody would send them to the hospital, they could end up in a concentration camp where they would have to endure all sorts of tortures that these inhuman beasts have devised, or they could be thrown into jail for years for just one word of complaint. People we trust, who were in Germany, say that one does not dare to speak with anyone in Germany. Not in the streetcar, not in your apartment. No-one lets anyone inside their home, they close the door to every visitor, and they do not dare to visit their friends. Every lust for revenge, every lowly instinct is encouraged and given an opportunity to fester. To be fired without notice, thrown out of business, handed over to hunger, in constant fear of being ripped from their loved ones and falling into the hands of these beasts – that is the fate of our former officials today.⁴⁰⁰

A letter from a woman in Germany to another woman in Vienna, acquaintances who had met at the 1932 Olympic Games, described the Nazis’ rapid consolidation of power in Germany:

The “coordination” has been completed. We have no idea what’s going to happen, but it certainly won’t be anything good. Last week, the Uedersee house was seized, a residence hall with about 400 beds. It is a disgrace. We had to kick out all of our vacationing guests. The caretaker and his family are going hungry. The property is being used for target practice. In businesses and workplaces it’s also going badly; people are being let go for absolutely no reason...⁴⁰¹

³⁹⁹ “Die Naturfreunde in Deutschland,” Der Naturfreund (1934): 22.

⁴⁰⁰ “Die Naturfreunde in Deutschland” 22. “Man würde sie spitalfähig machen, sie würden vielleicht in einem Konzentrationslager alle Qualen zu erdulden haben, die entmenschte Bestien zu ersinnen vermögen, oder man würde sie für ein einziges Wort der Klage für Jahre in den Kerker werfen. Unsere Vertrauensleute, die in Deutschland waren, sagen: Man darf in Deutschland mit niemand zu sprechen wagen. Nicht in der Straßenbahn, nicht in der Wohnung. Man läßt niemand in seine Behausung, verschließt jedem Besuch die Tür, wagt selbst nicht seine Freunde zu besuchen. Allen Rachegeleüsten, allen niedrigen Instinkten ist weite Betätigungsmöglichkeit gegeben. Fristlos aus den Betrieben geworfen, dem Hunger preisgegeben, in steter Furcht, von ihren Lieben gerissen zu werden und in die Hände von Bestien zu geraten, das ist heute das Schicksal unserer früheren Sachverwalter.”

⁴⁰¹ “Die Naturfreunde in Deutschland” 22. “Bei uns ist die *Gleichschaltung* vollzogen worden. Wir wissen noch gar nicht, was werden wird; Gutes bestimmt nicht. In der vergangenen Woche ist das Uedersee-Haus genommen worden, eine Unterkunftsstätte mit etwa 400 Lagern. Es ist eine Schande. Alle Feriengäste mußten wir das Haus räumen. Der Hüttenwart samt seiner Familie ist brotlos geworden. Das Gelände wird zu Schießübungen benützt. Auch in den Betrieben und Werkstätten geht es schändlich zu, alles wird entlassen aus nichtigen Gründen...”

The SS and SA beat guests and employees at the Naturfreunde huts and lodges, destroying the furniture, cookware and equipment.

The Naturfreunde printed two photographs in their last publication. Both depict the shattered remnants of their treasured huts. In one picture, there is a garishly painted swastika on a white wall in the background. In the foreground, overturned furniture litters the ground, with broken dishes on the floor. In another picture, twelve panes of glass are broken out of a window, and dishes and cookware are strewn all over the floor. Human presence is elided from both photographs, creating an atmosphere of absence and loss. The photographs are scenes of a violent crime, evidence of the brutalization and destruction not only of alpine huts, but also of the Tourist Club “The Naturfreunde.”

Chapter 6: Gustav Renker and the Alpine Novel

Writing in 1938, Alois Dreyer, the Alpenverein's literary historian of alpine writing, looked back over two centuries of alpine literature. Dreyer noted that the increase in German mountaineering achievements had been accompanied by a flourishing body of literature and poetry throughout the history of alpinism:

German-language literary arts reflect a meaningful transformation in alpinism. The German *Volk* have assumed a distinguished role in the conquest of the Alps, and, in their alpine literature and poetry, the Germans have revealed a fervor and depth of feeling like no other people on earth.⁴⁰²

Dreyer's *völkisch* claims of Germany's superior depth of feeling, which set Germany's *Kultur* apart from the cold materialism of Western European *Zivilisation*, positioned alpine literature as the artistic manifestation of German dominance in mountaineering. The "depths of feeling" expressed by German authors and poets described the heights of ascent in the Alps and, in the 1930s, in the Himalayas. Dreyer's literary history traced the development not only of alpine literature, but also of German mountaineering.

What was alpine literature? This simple question was the subject of a great deal of debate within the pages of the Alpenverein's publications. Some contemporary critics lamented the state of alpine literature and poetry, claiming that it failed miserably to describe the sublime landscape of the Alps in appropriately sublime prose and verse. Indeed, as the highly respected mountaineer Eugen Guido Lammer wrote in 1893, "today's alpine literature has only one virtue: that it will go under."⁴⁰³ Responding to

⁴⁰² Alois Dreyer, *Geschichte der alpinen Literatur* (Munich: Gesellschaft Alpiner Bücherfreunde, 1938) 12. "Den bedeutsamen Wandel im Alpinismus spiegelt auch die Dichtkunst, namentlich die deutsche. Denn in der Bezwingung der Alpen nimmt das deutsche Volk einen hervorragenden Platz ein, und in der alpinen Dichtung offenbart es eine Inbrunst und Tiefe der Begeisterung wie kein anderes Volk der Erde."

⁴⁰³ Robert Hans Walter, "Einige Gedanken zur alpinen Dichtung," *Der Bergsteiger* (1928): 356. "Die alpine Literatur von heute ist wert, daß sie zugrunde gehe." Walter quotes Lammer's 1893 essay, "Vom alpinen Stil."

Lammer's caustic dismissal of alpine literature, Josef Rabl, one of Lammer's contemporary mountaineers, had the following to say:

You demand art, and rightly so! Because only the best will do for the most glorious, sublime theme of the Alps. Your demand does not aim too high, but it also requires nothing less than God-given artistic talent. Do you really believe that someone with such enormous talent would hand over their work for free to our Alpenverein publications? Do you believe that it is possible for such a person, if they chose to write such material, wouldn't know better how to value their own time and talent? Or do you believe that those who have graced us with their objective descriptions should now retreat into introspection and lovingly observe nature? – If these gentlemen were not so dry by nature, they would have written otherwise from the beginning! Or do you believe that it is possible that our tourists, storming from peak to peak, could find time to plunge themselves into the observation of nature and of their own sensations?⁴⁰⁴

Rabl's retort goes on to suggest that alpine literature had to do more than simply describe mountaineers climbing a mountain; instead, alpine literature had to address the major themes of the day:

Once again we are fighting about old and new alpine style; we are not suffering from style at all, though, but rather from our choice of subject: the exclusive focus on the mountaineer and the mountain is what makes our alpine literature so unenjoyable. Every time, it is only the mountaineer and the mountain that are paraded before us, and everything else is shut out that could make the connection between these two heroic figures and humanity, between the mountaineer, mountain and the great questions of the day. The experience of ascent and descent alone cannot hold the reader's attention, except in the most dreadful, sensational cases. In this current form, our alpine literature is exhausted.⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Walter 356. "Sie fordern Kunst; mit Recht! Denn für den herrlichsten erhabenen Stoff der Alpen ist gerade das Beste gut genug. Ihre Forderung ist nicht zu hoch gespannt, aber sie enthält auch nicht weniger, als man von einem gottbegnadeten Künstler erwarten darf. Sollten Sie nun wirklich glauben, daß jemand, der solche Begabung besitzt, für unsere alpinen Vereinszeitschriften Gratisarbeiten liefern wird? Halten Sie es für möglich, daß dieser jemand, welcher so zu schreiben vermöchte, seine Zeit und seine Talente nicht besser zu verwerten wissen wird? Oder sollten Sie glauben, daß diejenigen, welche uns bisher mit objektiven Schilderungen beglückten, nun in sich gehen und die Natur liebevoll betrachten werden? – Wären diese Herren nicht von Natur trocken, so hätten sie von Anbeginn anders geschrieben! Oder halten Sie es für wahrscheinlich, daß unsere von Gipfel zu Gipfel stürmenden Touristen Zeit finden könnten, sich in die Betrachtung der Natur und ihres eigenen Empfindens zu versenken?"

⁴⁰⁵ Walter 357. "Wieder streitet man sich um den alten und neuen alpinen Stil, während wir gar nicht am Stile kranken, sondern am Gegenstande: Die Beschränkung auf den Bergsteiger und auf den Berg ist es, die unsere alpine Literatur ungenießbar macht. Immer wird uns nur der Bergsteiger und der Berg vorgeführt

By the turn of the century, however, many authors were contributing to a growing body of novels, novellas, serial novels and poetry focused exclusively on the Alps. Indeed, by 1928, one observer commented that, “in an astonishingly short period of time, alpinism has become a powerful cultural force that encompasses everything.”⁴⁰⁶

This boastful claim illustrates just how passionately Alpenverein mountaineers struggled over how mountaineering should be represented, and how tenaciously they defended their perspective. Anticipating the debates on the mountain film (*Bergfilm*), many critics and essayists believed that literary representations performed the important function of presenting mountaineering to a lay public and forming the dominant public image of the mountaineer. Some believed that alpine literature was conforming to the demands of the reading public for action-packed pulp fiction, rather than presenting the “true” essence of mountaineering:

I cannot bear these “alpine novels.” The hero is such a bruiser, a superman (*Übermensch*), and of course a lone wolf (*Führerloser*). He is gruff, abrasive and raw, which makes it painful to read. Have these authors never seen an amiable, great mountaineer? ... Or are such books written for the sensation-thirsty public, which so often has an inadequate understanding of mountains and mountaineers?⁴⁰⁷

Such critiques often pointed to the shortcomings of alpine literature, conducting a covert comparison of existing literature with an implied gold standard for mountaineering. If a

und dabei alles ausgeschaltet, was auf die großen Beziehungen dieser beiden Helden zur Menschheit und zu ihren großen Fragen deuten könnte. Das Erlebnis des Hinauf- und Hinuntersteigens allein kann den Leser nur noch in den gräßlichsten Fällen fesseln. In dieser Form ist der Gegenstand erschöpft.”

⁴⁰⁶ Walter 356. “In erstaunlich kurzer Zeit hat sich der Alpinismus zu einer machtvollen, alle Kreise umfassenden Kulturerscheinung.”

⁴⁰⁷ “Von Biwaks, alpinen Romanen und Führern,” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 8 Jan 1926: 1-2. “Ich kann diese ‘Alpinen Romane’ nicht leiden. Da ist das eine Mal der Held so ein Kraftmeier, ein Uebermensch, natürlich ein ‘Führerloser.’ Er ist schroff, auch ruppig und grob kann er sein, daß es beim Lesen weh tut. Haben die Autoren lebenswürdige große Bergsteiger noch nicht gesehen? ... Oder sind solche Bücher für das sensationsdurstige große Publikum geschrieben, das von Bergen und Bergsteigen oft so unzureichende und unklare Vorstellungen hat?”

novel did not conform to the Alpenverein's concept of the mountaineer, the author was accused of pandering to a mass public unfamiliar with mountains and mountaineering.

Yet the authors of alpine novels were not concerned exclusively with whether or not their works toed the Alpenverein's narrative line. Many authors at the turn of the century sought instead to address the social ills afflicting the alpine population. As we read in chapter two, alpine space had undergone a profound transformation by 1900. The coming of the railroad, accompanied by palatial hotels and resorts and the construction of hydroelectric dams, caused massive upheavals for the native people of the Alps. The social dislocations and cultural conflicts generated by this collision between modern tourism and traditional alpine life was also reflected in a growing body of literature that gave voice to the plight of the mountain peasant.

For all of its detrimental effects, the tourism industry also offered new employment opportunities to the local populations surrounding booming resort areas. Not everyone approved of this newfound potential for social mobility. An entire genre of novels began to appear that were dedicated to warning peasants about the dangers of leaving their traditional ways of life. In his epistolary novel *Das ewige Licht* (*The Eternal Light*, 1898), the author Peter Rosegger narrates the fate of the mountain village of Saint Maria, which is gradually destroyed by unscrupulous foreign Jewish businessmen; at the end of the novel, the formerly happy people have become slaves hopelessly ensnared in the machinery of modernity.⁴⁰⁸ Other novels warned mountain youths against falling in love with rich girls from the city and decried the willingness of peasants to sell anything for money.⁴⁰⁹

⁴⁰⁸ Peter Rosegger, *Das ewige Licht. Erzählung aus den Schriften eines Waldpfarrers* (Leipzig: L. Staackmann Verlag, 1923). These novels were quite popular; by 1923, 87,000 copies of Rosegger's complete works had been printed.

⁴⁰⁹ Albert Specker, *Studien zur Alpenzählung der deutschen Schweiz* (Zurich: Polygraphisches Institut, 1920) 78-79.

Gustav Renker (1889-1967) was one author who combined these two major themes of alpine literature: the representation of the authentic mountaineer, situated within the historical and cultural context of the alpine village threatened by encroaching modernity. Renker was unique in his approach to alpine literature, weaving the familiar heroics of mountaineering with calls for reconciliation between the multiple tensions within the culture of alpinism, between conservative tradition and progressive innovation, between the countryside and the city, between unspoiled and industrialized nature, and between mountaineers and the local population. In his alpine literature, Renker depicts the development of these conflicts and resolves them in the imaginative context of the alpine novel. As we shall see, Renker's work offered his readers a vision of how alpine space and the practice of mountaineering could combine to act as a mediating force between tradition and modernity.

GUSTAV RENKER

Gustav Renker was born in Vienna on 12 October 1889. He grew up in Bodensdorf on the Ossiacher See in the Austrian state of Kärnten. Renker studied music and music history at the University of Vienna, where he earned his license as a conductor and his doctorate in music history. Before the outbreak of World War I, Renker worked in Vienna, Graz and Nürnberg as a choral director and a composer.

When the War broke out, however, Renker chose to join the army, a choice that definitively changed the course of his professional career. Writing prolifically from the alpine front, Renker became a familiar narrative voice within the pages of the Alpenverein's *Mitteilungen* and *Zeitschriften*. Between 1915 and 1917, Renker published

five separate pieces chronicling his experiences on the front, more than any other soldier-mountaineer.⁴¹⁰

Renker's literary debut, *Als Bergsteiger gegen Italien (A Mountaineer against Italy)*, 1918), described his wartime experiences. Renker followed his autobiographical work with over fifty novels of the *Bergroman* (mountain novel) and *Heimatroman* (homeland novel) genres. Renker's massive literary production also made him one of the most-read authors in German-speaking Europe. And while Renker wrote his numerous novels, he also published several short stories, essays, and a serial novel in the alpine press. Renker published these shorter works in popular alpine journals such as the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger Zeitung* and *Der Bergsteiger*, reaching an audience beyond the confines of the Alpenverein's readership. Renker published more works of fiction than any other author in the community of alpine writers and essayists writing between the Wars, which is no mean feat considering the enormous volume of literature produced by mountaineers during the Weimar Republic. No other literary voice reached as many readers who were interested in mountains and mountaineering. And as we shall see in the next chapter, his works inspired some of the narratives found in the *Bergfilme* (mountain films) of the 1920s and 1930s.

The genre of the mountain novel belongs properly in the category of literature known as *Trivilliteratur* (trivial literature). Scholars of German literature have long viewed trivial literature with some suspicion, if not outright disdain; they simply preferred to focus their attentions on the literary works already included in the canon. Beginning in the 1960s, however, a new focus on the sociological aspects of literature,

⁴¹⁰ See: Gustav Renker, "Der Krieg in den Bergen," *ZDÖAV* 47 (1916): 219-236; "Das Dorf in den Bergen," *MDÖAV* 17/18 (1916): 145-149; "Der Berge Jugendarbeit im Kriege," *MDÖAV* 9/10 (1916): 74-77; "Das Dorf in den Bergen" *MDÖAV* 17/18 (1916): 145-149; "Bergsteiger im Kriege" *MDÖAV* 9/10 (1917): 55-57; "Bergtage im Felde - Tagebuchblätter von Dr. Gustav Renker" *ZDÖAV* 48 (1917) 177-200. See chapter one for a discussion of Renker's wartime literary production.

including historical studies of production and reception, began to emerge, and the vast body of trivial literature became a rich new field of inquiry for a new generation of literary scholars.

Part of the fascination with trivial literature stemmed from its sheer variety. Indeed, the scholarship on trivial literature has expressed consternation when it comes to defining precise analytical categories. Some prefer such categories as the “the novels of the feminine, alpine, criminality, physician, wars, morals, the wild west, and the future,”⁴¹¹ while others prefer such classifications as “family and romance,” “thrillers, novels about secret societies and robbers,” “travel and adventure,” science fiction,” “historical and documentary fiction,” and “*Heimat* novels.”⁴¹² What is clear, however, is that, beginning in the eighteenth century, an enormous body of trivial literature was published for and marketed to a wide audience. By the twentieth century, the production and reception of this trivial literature was facilitated by a network of lending libraries, serial publishers, vanity presses and an array of publishing houses dedicated to a staggering variety of literary production.

Like many of their counterparts in the trivial literature market, Gustav Renker’s alpine novels engaged in implicit and explicit critiques of civilization. Some sub-genres of trivial literature established the countryside as an idyllic counterweight to “unnatural civilization.”⁴¹³ Civilization was often criticized indirectly through authors’ depictions of

⁴¹¹ Walter Nutz, Der Trivialroman. Seine Formen und seine Hersteller. Ein Beitrag zur Literatursoziologie (Köln: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1962) 14-15. “der Frauen-, der Berg-, der Kriminal-, der Arzt-, der Kriegs-, der Sitten-, der Wildwest-, und der Zukunftsroman...”

⁴¹² Peter Nusser, Trivilliteratur (Stuttgart: J.B. Metzlersche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1991) 58-87. “Familien- und Liebesromane,” “Schauer-, Geheimbund- und Räuberromane,” “Verbrechens-, Mysterien- und Kriminalromane,” “Reise- und Abenteuerromane,” “Science Fiction,” “Historische und zeitgeschichtliche Romane,” and “*Heimatromane*.”

⁴¹³ Gerhard Schweizer, Bauernroman und Faschismus. Zur Ideologiekritik einer literarischen Gattung (Tübingen: Tübingen Vereinigung für Volkskunde E.V. Schloss, 1976) 16.

local alpine characters as peasants with a “defiant optimism against urban civilization.”⁴¹⁴ The cast of characters in the alpine novel, however, often went beyond utopian fantasies of life on the land; such novels often played host to an imaginary world populated by “pig-headed ancestors, small-time tenant farmers, eremites, forest people, belief in witches, mysterious places, moors, ancient professions...”⁴¹⁵ Indeed, the alpine novel hosts a surprising variety of characters, both realistic and fantastical.

The alpine novel eludes easy classification in terms of literary genre, since it borrows heavily from both German romanticism and realism. The alpine novel contains several portrayals of altered states, hallucinations and pathological visions of grandeur, as well as fantastical depictions of nature as a character in its own right. When an avalanche thunders down and kills a character, it is not merely an accident; the narrative bestows will and life upon nature, casting nature as yet another character in the alpine menagerie. In these respects, the alpine novel owes a debt to German romanticism.

At the same time, the alpine novel borrows from German realism. The attention to the local detail of alpine villages, whether to local dialect or customs, belies a concern to represent alpine life “as it is.” As one literary scholar has noted, the alpine novels have an almost anthropological attention to detail: “the mountain pasture and the dairy maid, the farm, the romantic world of the mountains, the shepherd, the church festivals, and the cantankerous and hardened old men that converse in guttural speech in village pubs – all of this is so precisely described that the reader is able to see it.”⁴¹⁶ The precision of detail,

⁴¹⁴ Schweizer 17.

⁴¹⁵ Nutz 43. “starrköpfige Altvordern, kleinliche Hintersassen, Eremiten, Waldmenschen, Hexenglauben, geheimnisvolle Örtlichkeiten, Moor, uralte Berufstraditionen...”

⁴¹⁶ Nutz 45. “Die Alm und die Sennerin, der Bauernhof, die romantische Bergwelt, der Viehhirt, das Kirchweihfest und die stets zänkischen und föhrenharten Alten, die in Dorfkneipen gutturale Unterhaltung pflegen, sind genau so gezeichnet, wie der Leser sie sieht.”

down to the transcription of local dialects in dialogue, reveals the alpine novel's connection to German realism.

One feature of the alpine novel that sets it apart from the *Bauernroman* or the *Heimatroman*, for example, is its alpine environment. As in the mountain film, nature often intrudes upon the narrative as a character in its own right. In this regard, the emphasis upon elemental nature hints at the influence of so-called poetic realism, a realism that describes natural phenomena in great detail while simultaneously indulging in a great deal of poetic interpretation. For in the alpine novel, nature is not some idyllic natural backdrop, but rather a dangerous environment essential to the narrative: “the backdrop in the alpine or *Heimat* novel is not quite so “lovely” ... Nature interferes mightily in human affairs: glacial streams plummet down into chasms, fights between rivals take place on rickety wooden bridges, there are poachers and gunshots.”⁴¹⁷ Yet the mountains also serve as a backdrop for romance or starry-eyed philosophizing in the alpine novel, rendering nature a potentially explosive element in the storyline. As we shall see, the mountains themselves often become the main characters of Gustav Renker's novels.

As the foremost writer of alpine novels, Renker's works offer a representative sample of the conflicts, thematic elements, and resolutions that were widespread in the alpine literature of the Weimar Republic. The competing portraits of masculinity and femininity, of countryside and city, of tradition and innovation, and of irrational and rational modes of perception, are resolved in Renker's novels in ways that illuminate the debates surrounding mountaineering's significance. Although Renker is a marginal author in terms of German literature of the Weimar Republic, his work is essential for

⁴¹⁷ Nutz 44. “Die Kulisse des Berg- und *Heimatromans* ist nicht so “lieblich” ... Die Natur bricht elementar ins menschliche Treiben ein: es stürzen Wildbäche die Klamm herunter, Rivalitätskämpfe finden auf schwankenden Holzbrücken statt, es wird gewildert und Flinten krachen.”

understanding how literary representations of mountains and mountaineering were communicated to a niche market of dedicated readers.

This chapter focuses on two of Renker's most popular works: *Heilige Berge. Ein Alpenroman* (*Holy Mountains. An Alpine Novel*, 1921) and *Bergkristall* (*Mountain Crystal*, 1930). Both of these works treat the mountains as a utopian discursive space that is at once rejuvenating and inspiring, threatening and deadly. Within the discursive environment of the Alps, Renker's characters wrestle with many of the issues debated in the pages of the alpine press. Renker proposed fictional resolutions to real quandaries facing mountaineers of his day; for example, how were mountaineers to reconcile the modernization of the Alps – the building of hiking paths, roads and train routes – with their desire for unspoiled mountain landscapes? What was the proper mode in which mountaineers were to perceive the mountain landscape and their role in conquering it? And how were Germans to preserve the pre-industrial haven of this alpine *Heimat*? Renker offered answers to these questions, and many more, in his works of alpine fiction.

HEILIGE BERGE. EIN ALPENROMAN (1921)

Renker's first alpine novel, *Holy Mountains*, tells the story of Walter Lauener⁴¹⁸, an engineer from the city who both transforms, and is transformed by, the alpine landscape. The novel is a variation on the genre of the German novel of education (*Bildungsroman*), in which the protagonist's needs and desires conflict with an established social order, resulting in a process of maturation that ends with the protagonist's incorporation into society. In *Holy Mountains*, Lauener's task is to build a dam high in an alpine valley, and his personal development arises from his confrontation,

⁴¹⁸ Renker named many of the protagonists in his alpine novels, including Walter Lauener, after Swiss mountain guides who worked during the nineteenth century. See: Carl Egger, *Pioniere der Alpen* (Zurich: Verlag Amstutz, Herdeg & Co., 1946). The table of contents contains names that surface throughout Renker's works.

and eventual reconciliation, with the local residents, who view the building of the dam with suspicion and distrust.⁴¹⁹ As Lauener carries out his work, he learns to appreciate the culture of the alpine villagers, and at the end of the novel, he is welcomed as a member of the village. Lauener's eventual acceptance into the ranks of the alpine peasants is made possible by his friendship with Hans Lehner, a young man from the village who agrees to teach Lauener how to climb mountains. In return, Lauener comes to know and love the pastoral life of the alpine village of Alpmatten, and seeks to complete the dam project in a manner respectful of the villagers' concerns. Lauener's path of development creates the fictional space for Renker to address many of the tensions within the discourse of mountaineering: countryside and city, conservative tradition and technological innovation, religion and science, masculinity and femininity.

The tension between the countryside and the city is one of the major conflicts in the novel. Lauener is described as an urban creature who "loved cities and their colorful goings-on."⁴²⁰ Arriving in the Alps, Lauener thinks fondly back to his university days, when, both in Zürich and in Germany, he "learned to treasure companionship and the joys of living well."⁴²¹ Lauener's preference for the urban environment is made clear as "he saw the city towers in the distance and experienced a slight regret that he now had to

⁴¹⁹ The dam in *Heilige Berge* alludes to the frenetic construction of hydroelectric power facilities in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. From 1890 to 1900, waterworks provided power directly to nearby towns and resorts; between 1900 and 1914, electricity was produced in the Alps and delivered via power cables to large cities outside of the Alps. See Mary L. Barker, "Traditional Landscape and Mass Tourism in the Alps" *Geographical Review* 72.4 (1982): 395-396, and Werner Bätzing, *Die Alpen. Geschichte und Zukunft einer europäischen Kulturlandschaft* (Munich: Verlag C.H. Beck, 2005) 190-193.

⁴²⁰ Gustav Renker, *Heilige Berge. Ein Alpenroman* (Heidelberg: Keyser'sche Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1950) 7.

⁴²¹ Renker *Heilige Berge* 7. "Sein Studium hatte ihn aus seiner *Heimatstadt* Zürich auf einige Jahre nach Deutschland geführt, und dort wie in Zürich hatte er Geselligkeit und frohe Daseinslust schätzen gelernt..."

wander, as a pioneer of civilization, into the loneliness of a wild alpine valley.”⁴²² Lauener is not the first or last “pioneer of civilization,” however, who will wend his way into the Alps; the train that Lauener rides to the foot of the Alps will soon travel further into the mountains, as soon as the additional track is laid.

Lauener views himself as a light in the wilderness, a technological trailblazer. The narrator informs us that Lauener’s employer “Hügli had money and business-sense, and Lauener wielded the sword of science”⁴²³ As an engineer in the service of invested capital, Lauener’s job is to ensure that the project goes smoothly, according to plan and within its budget. Lauener’s enthusiasm is not merely mechanical, however; it also takes on messianic tones as he exclaims to himself: “If one were able to harness these wild waters, just imagine how rich the country would become!”⁴²⁴ Lauener embodies the industrial spirit associated with the modern city, applying his engineering knowledge and skill to force the land to yield up its natural resources.

The first person that Lauener meets in the Alps is Hans Lehner, a young farmer who personifies the agricultural culture of the alpine village of Alpmatten. The narrator’s description of Hans’s alpine physiognomy positions him as Lauener’s opposite: Hans is “a tall, blond boy, all muscles and tendons,” who speaks “thickly, as if he had to force the words from his tongue.”⁴²⁵ Despite the rain, Hans does not wear a jacket; his shirt is

⁴²² Renker Heilige Berge 8. “Walter Lauener ... sah in der Ferne die Türme der Stadt und empfand eine leichte schmerzhaftige Regung, daß er nun in die Einsamkeit eines wilden Bergtales als Pionier der Zivilisation wandern mußte.”

⁴²³ Renker Heilige Berge 8. “Und er, Walter Lauener, war sein Bahnbrecher; Hügli hatte Geld und Geschäftsgeist, Lauener das wildnisrodende Schwert der Wissenschaft.”

⁴²⁴ Renker Heilige Berge 8. “Wenn man diese Wildwässer alle dienstbar machen könnte, wie reich würde dann das Land!”

⁴²⁵ Renker, Heilige Berge 10. “Ein langer, blonder Bursche, an dem alles Muskel und Sehne zu sein schien ... mit schweren, sich mühsam von der Zunge ringenden Worten.”

soaked and wide open, and the narrator notes how “his muscles flexed in his brown arms like snakes bound together against their will.”⁴²⁶ Lauener looks into Hans’s “clear light blue eyes, in his massive, freckled face,” where Lauener sees “a look of unbridled wildness.”⁴²⁷ This alpine Adonis embodies the elemental power of his natural surroundings, a force simultaneously beautiful, erotic and threatening.

Lauener and Hans’s initial encounter highlights the vast gulf separating the city and the countryside, but more importantly it underscores how, at the beginning, this is a one-way attraction; Lauener is fascinated by Hans, but Hans would rather be rid of the engineer. Indeed, Hans introduces himself abruptly and aggressively: “my name is Hans Lehner, and I don’t want anything to do with you or your work.”⁴²⁸ Lauener, however, takes Hans’s truculent rejection as a challenge; during the wagon ride from the train station to the village of Alpmatten, Lauener tries to convince Hans of the benefits of the water works project. Hans listens to Lauener’s lectures, but he remains stubbornly opposed to the engineer’s overtures to technology and progress.

As they cross the mountain pass to Alpmatten, however, the mountains make their first intervention in the narrative. The fog lifts briefly, and

It seemed to Walter Lauener that his surroundings were in no way as dismal and dreary as he had thought. A fresh breath of wind from the valley reinforced the feeling that something new, something he had never before seen, had appeared before his soul.⁴²⁹

⁴²⁶ Renker, Heilige Berge 11. “In seinen Armen spielten die Muskeln wie ein Bündel mühsam zusammengefesselter Schlangen.”

⁴²⁷ Renker, Heilige Berge 11. “... wasserblaue, helle Augen in einem derben, sommersprossigen Gesicht ... ein Blick von so ungebändigter Wildheit...”

⁴²⁸ Renker, Heilige Berge 13. “Hans Lehner heiße ich, und mit eurem Werke will ich nichts zu tun haben.”

⁴²⁹ Renker, Heilige Berge 15. “Die Gegend schien Walter Lauener jetzt keineswegs so düster und trostlos wie anfangs, und ein herber Luftzug, der aus einem Winkel des Tales niederstrich, verstärkte in ihm das Gefühl, daß hier etwas Neues und nie Geschautes vor seine Seele trat.”

Lauener finds himself in a landscape of revelation, where his typically sober, empirical approach to the world is suspended for a moment, and he stares at a massive mountain, the Schneewinkelhorn, in wonderment. In a state of epiphany, Lauener observes Hans, whose “rough, simple face seemed to reflect the light that sparkled high up in the mountains.”⁴³⁰ Lauener enthuses that he wishes to climb this peak one day, and Hans tells him that, though many have tried, none have succeeded, for the mysterious Old One (*Der Alte*) guards the Schneewinkelhorn. Lauener asks who this old man is, and Hans responds that, “no one knows. But if he wants to, he will destroy your power plant.”⁴³¹ Lauener, clearly disappointed by this turn in the conversation, continues on toward Alpmatten. The Schneewinkelhorn has become Lauener’s geography of desire, yet to reach it, he must confront the Old One, a personification of the superstitious religious beliefs of the alpine villagers.

The stage is set for Walter’s central dilemma, which is also the novel’s central tension: how best to achieve a compromise between his engineering project and his desire to preserve the mountains. Walter feels himself torn between his professional duties and his personal need to honor and protect the culture of Alpmatten and the surrounding natural environment. Walter oscillates between his fascination with the enormity of the water works project and his newfound love for the mountains and its people, and this is the central theme that occupies the rest of the novel, as a few examples from the text will make clear.

First, within the overall context of the mountain environment, there are two locations that are equally significant for the novel: the mountain village of Alpmatten (the

⁴³⁰ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 17. “Über dem derben, unschönen Gesicht lag es jetzt wie ein Widerschein des Lichtes, das da oben zitterte.”

⁴³¹ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 18. “Das weiß niemand. Aber wenn er will, wird er euer Kraftwerk in Scherben schlagen.”

Bergdorf) and the quarters of the workers who are building the dam (the *Arbeiterkolonie* or *Barackendorf*). Alpmatten is an idyllic little village whose residents live a life defined by primitive conditions and hard work; as Walter's host explains, Alpmatten's villagers must "work year in, year out."⁴³² The villagers earn their sustenance from agricultural work and the herding of sheep and goats. Their lives are synchronized with the drama of the soil, with the endless cycle of seasons that determine when to plant and when to harvest. They are a simple folk whose houses are built of rough-hewn wood and whose enormous furniture leads Walter to believe that he is living in a land of giants. In short, Alpmatten is a pastoral place, a village where time stands still and identity is kept alive through folk dances, intimate family relationships, and oral history.

In strong contrast to the *Bergdorf*, the worker's quarters near the dam are temporary structures and living conditions are squalid. Walter, who spends his first night in the relative peace of Alpmatten, is initially horrified by the conditions in the company town, where an army of Italians, hired for the construction of the dam, congregate. The narrator describes the worker's colony in terms usually reserved for the poorer quarters of an industrial city:

On a wide space at the edge of the stream rose a row of simple, wooden barracks, where half-naked brown children yelled incomprehensibly in another language. From the doors of the huts issued smoke and steam that smelled of fat, oil and cheese. In front of one building, there squatted a young woman with an old, tired face and a crown of jet-black hair... Lauener continued on through the worker's settlement, where in the paths and streets there lay trash, paper and foul-smelling refuse. It was an outlandish contrast to the quiet mountain village...⁴³³

⁴³² Renker, *Heilige Berge* 23. "Arbeit jahrein, jahraus."

⁴³³ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 29-30. "Auf einem breiten Platz am Ufer erhob sich eine Reihe schlichter, hölzerner Baracken, vor denen einige halbnackte, nußbraune Kinder mit großem, unverständlichem Geschrei tollten. Aus den Türen der Hütten quollen Rauch und Speisedünste von zerlassenem Fett, Öl und Käse. Vor einem Gebäude hockte ein junges Weib mit altem, müdem Gesicht und einer Krone tiefschwarzen Haares auf dem Kopf ... Lauener schritt weiter durch die Arbeiterkolonie, auf deren Wegen und Straßen Abfälle, Papiere und übelriechender Unrat lagen. Es war ein seltsamer Gegensatz zu dem stillen Bergdorf..."

The makeshift construction of the structures, the poorly dressed children, the prematurely aged women, the general filth of the streets: all of this points to the dark side of industrialization, the underbelly of the modern city. Yet this particular scene is set in an alpine valley, far from urban industrial centers. The *Barackendorf* represents the encroachment of progress, accompanied by flimsy, squalid workers' quarters and the desperate human conditions that prevail there. And although the project only demands temporary reserves of labor, the detritus of modernity is there to stay: the construction of this worker's city suggests that "this wasn't some project that would be completed soon; rather, it seemed that the workers would be here for a much longer time."⁴³⁴

Despite the horrors of the *Barackendorf*, Lauener soon falls under the spell of his own ambition and the scale of the project: he is "astounded by the enormity of the undertaking for which he was to provide technical leadership."⁴³⁵ Yet he still maintains that the project must be conducted in a manner that does not unduly affect Alpmatten. In a discussion with his boss, the gruff industrialist Hügli, Lauener voices his concerns about the project's impact on Alpmatten. Hügli responds, "technology only brings benefits to such a backwater village as Alpmatten."⁴³⁶ In an inner monologue, however, Lauener envisions Alpmatten's future after the dam:

Lauener thought of the peace of this valley, of its austere, quiet people and its simple brown cottages. For years, the noise of industry would ring through the stillness, hammers would drown out the murmuring of the mountain stream, and strangers would come and go. At first, the Alpmatten villagers would step shyly

⁴³⁴ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 30. "...daß es keine Arbeit von heute auf morgen war, sondern daß man mit längerer Zeit rechnete."

⁴³⁵ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 30. "... die Größe des Unternehmens, dessen technische Leitung er übernehmen sollte."

⁴³⁶ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 32. "Aber im Grunde geben Sie doch zu, daß der Fortschritt, sonderlich in technischer Beziehung, für ein solches Hinterasien, wie es etwas das Alpmattental ist, nur einen gewaltigen Vorteil darstellt?"

aside, but later they would reassume their dogged character and try to make the best of it, opening their village and its doors to strangers. A peaceful island of humanity would slowly go under in its struggle for existence...⁴³⁷

Lauener's apocalyptic vision indicates the depth of his affection for Alpmatten and its inhabitants, as well as his understanding of the consequences that modernization poses for this alpine village.

By identifying the dam laborers as Italians, Renker references the political debates surrounding the loss of South Tyrol after World War I.⁴³⁸ Before World War I, South Tyrol had belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Located just south of Innsbruck, in the heart of the Alps, South Tyrol had a majority of German speakers. During World War I, the Austrian and Italian armies established a front through the high mountains along the Trentino Front. The Italian army occupied South Tyrol at the end of the War, and the Treaty of Saint-Germain, signed in 1919, ceded South Tyrol to Italy.⁴³⁹ Both Germany and Austria were outraged; they considered South Tyrol, with over 92% of its population speaking German, as an Austrian territory. Throughout the years of the Weimar Republic, numerous articles appeared in mountaineering club publications, alternately expressing anger and concern over the future of South Tyrol.

The *Barackendorf*, with all of its filth, its shady inhabitants and the babbling of foreign tongues, is a literary representation of the nightmare of Italian occupation. The war that later erupts between the honest villagers of Alpmatten and the stiletto-wielding

⁴³⁷ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 35. "Lauener dachte an den Frieden dieses Tales, an sein herbes, schweigsames Volk und an die braunen, schlichten Hütten. In etlichen Jahren würde die Industrie durch die Stille lärmern, Hämmer den Orgelklang der Sturzbäche überklappern und fremdes Volk aus- und eingehen. Die Alpmattner würden sich zuerst scheu zur Seite drücken, dann aber mit der zähen Lebenskraft der Äpler den Kampf aufnehmen, die Einfachheit hinwerfen und fremdem Wesen Tür und Tor öffnen. Eine friedliche Menschheitsinsel geht wieder einmal im Daseinskampf unter –."

⁴³⁸ Renker also fought on the South Tyrolean front against Italy in World War I.

⁴³⁹ Andrew Beattie, *The Alps. A Cultural History* (Cambridge: Oxford UP, 2006): 88-90.

Italians imagines a popular uprising in South Tyrol, a confrontation between the alpine peasants and the Italian interlopers. The novel's conclusion also envisions the resolution of this conflict. The Italians leave the valley after the dam is completed, and the shantytown is dismantled. The Italian presence is temporary and serves a purpose: to remind the villagers of their common heritage and tradition, and to bring them to fight for its preservation.

Second, Walter Lauener undergoes a significant transformation. Under Hans's tutelage, he becomes a mountaineer, which secures his gradual acceptance among the Alpmatten villagers. On a casual hike into the mountains surrounding Alpmatten, Lauener stumbles upon Hans at an alpine cottage. Hans reacts rudely to Lauener's presence, but Lauener's steady earnestness and his alpine panegyrics win Hans over. Lauener speaks in the language of revelation, of pious religiosity, telling Hans, "I want to get to know your mountains; they are an epiphany to me."⁴⁴⁰ Lauener's sentimental effusions break down Hans' resistance, and Hans reluctantly agrees to guide Lauener into the hallowed peaks of his homeland.

One of the visible manifestations of Lauener's personal transformation is his acquisition of mountaineering equipment. Before Hans can initiate Lauener into the mountains' secrets, he instructs Lauener to purchase his first piece of equipment: "mountaineering boots with nails in the soles."⁴⁴¹ On the first day of what soon become their regular Saturday outings, Hans stands in the *Barackendorf*, waiting for Lauener, where he "leaned on his heavy ice axe, puffing on his pipe and blowing out blue clouds

⁴⁴⁰ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 58. "Ich möchte wohl allmählich mit Eurer Gegend vertraut werden. Sie ist mir geradezu eine Offenbarung geworden."

⁴⁴¹ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 58. "... genagelte Schuhe."

of smoke.”⁴⁴² Lauener arrives with his own new boots and ice axe, and as they leave the worker’s quarters, “four heavy, iron-shod shoes stamped on the ground.”⁴⁴³

The iconography of mountaineering boots, ice axe, and rope is hardly Renker’s own invention, and by deploying these symbolic items in this narrative, Renker refers explicitly to a long-standing visual tradition within mountaineering. Alpine Ex Libris – the stamps used to indicate ownership in books – incorporated these exact icons to identify the book’s owner as a mountaineer.⁴⁴⁴ The front pages of the magazines and journals of the alpine press were likewise decorated with variations on the boots, axe and rope. Alpine photography, circulating in anthologies published at the beginning of the twentieth century, also often focused on the mountaineer’s implements, positioning them centrally in the frame to stand in for the mountaineer’s presence.⁴⁴⁵ When Renker describes Hans and Lauener’s equipment, he also draws upon a reservoir of visual imagery that identifies them both as authentic mountaineers.

By donning the implements of the mountaineering trade, Lauener also projects a new identity suffused with authority. It also sparks a romance between Lauener and Rita, the wife of Feltrinelli, an Italian who runs the company store in the *Barackendorf*. Rita confesses later in the novel to Lauener, “there you were, as you set out with rope and ice axe for the mountains, like a priest making his way to the holiest of altars. How often I

⁴⁴² Renker, *Heilige Berge* 68. “Vor der Tür des Hauses Feltrinelli stand Hans Lehner, stützte sich auf seinen wichtigen Eispickel und paffte aus einem Pfeifchen blaue Wolken vor sich hin.”

⁴⁴³ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 70. “Vier schwere, eisenbeschlagene Schuhe stampften den Boden.”

⁴⁴⁴ Helmuth Zebhauser, *Alpine Exlibris. Sinn und Bild in einer grafischen Kunst von 1890-1930* (Munich: Verlag F. Bruckmann, 1985).

⁴⁴⁵ Deutscher Alpenverein, *Berge in Kasten. Fotografien aus der Sammlung des deutschen Alpenvereins, 1870-1914* (Munich: Deutscher Alpenverein e.V., 2006).

would watch you as you went into the peaks.”⁴⁴⁶ Lauener’s gear marks him as an acolyte of a natural religion, as a novitiate in the secrets of the mountains.

And despite his reliance on empirical rationalism, Lauener finds himself drawn to the mystical heights of the mountains surrounding Alpmatten. On more than one occasion, he finds himself slipping into altered states inspired by the lofty peaks. On a walk along a mountain stream, Lauener has his first romantic encounter with Rita, who is relaxing in the alpine sun. He finds himself overwhelmed by his desire for her, and, attempting to stroke her black hair, frightens her. She runs away and he is left alone. Afterwards, he sinks into a reflective stupor. When he wakes up, there is a telling moment: “... it was as if he had seen himself in a dream – he had not thought things through. He realized this in a flash, he, who was accustomed to clear, intelligent rationality, and he stood up quickly.”⁴⁴⁷ The first thing he sees as he surfaces from the daydream is the implicit cause of his instinctual lust for Rita: “the Schneewinkelhorn, standing between the jagged cliffs of the Langgrätli.”⁴⁴⁸ His desire to climb the Schneewinkelhorn converges with his love for the beautiful Italian woman in a moment that establishes the enchanting power of the mountains and their ability to override his rational predispositions.

The Schneewinkelhorn also exerts a baleful influence on Feltrinelli, Rita’s husband, a failed sculptor whose defining attributes are jealousy and hubris. Feltrinelli senses that something is going on between Lauener and Rita, and decides that the way to

⁴⁴⁶ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 117. “Und hier warst du, wenn du Samstag mit Seil und Pickel auszogst, für mich wie ein Priester, der zu den heiligsten Altären geht. Wie oft habe ich dir nachgeblickt, wenn du so hingingst.”

⁴⁴⁷ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 49. “Er hatte nur gesehen – gedacht hatte er nichts. Das wurde ihm, der klares, kluges Denken gewohnt war, mit einem Male bewußt, und er erhob sich rasch.”

⁴⁴⁸ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 49. “Zwischen dem Felsentore des Langgrätli stand das Schneewinkelhorn.”

win back Rita's affections is to climb the Schneewinkelhorn and place one of his sculptures upon its summit. Although Feltrinelli purchases his own mountaineering implements, ownership of the proper equipment does not make him a mountaineer, as his prideful attempt to climb the mountain reveals.⁴⁴⁹

Described as a "confused madman," Feltrinelli plans to carry his sculpture to the summit of the Schneewinkelhorn to plant it there at the only place holy enough for his work.⁴⁵⁰ His ambition and passion, however, are misdirected; they express his selfish desire to transform the mountain into a monument to his own work. When Feltrinelli sets out for his fateful climb, the narrator describes his technique as "risible," a further indicator of his inability to properly respect the mountains:

Feltrinelli did not possess any of the experience or technique that come from decades of struggling against the demons of the mountain. He knew nothing of the rope and its uses, he did not wield the ice-splitting axe in his fist – he was like a wanton child that clammers about in the boulders at the base of a cliff. Yet he was not driven merely by misdirected courage, but rather by the fanaticism of an idea. His heart did not quiver in awed reverence before the powers that surrounded him; the greatness of this stony primeval world did not register in his senses – he stumbled after the goal he had dreamed of for months, a goal that seemed to be the crowning achievement of his art. The mountain was not a miracle of creation to him; it was simply the top of a mountain, a place to be reached by senseless, thoughtless striving, where he wanted to place his work before the gates of eternity.⁴⁵¹

⁴⁴⁹ Renker repeatedly points out that Feltrinelli's character is incompatible with the requirements of mountaineering. Such depictions correspond with representations of Italians in the Alpenverein's publications. One of Renker's fellow soldiers on the Alpine front, Dr. Adolf Deye, described the relationship between Italians and mountains as follows: "a treacherous people, whose crooked essence does not fit in with the purity of the high mountains." ("...jenes tückisches Volk, dessen ungrades Wesen nicht zu der Reinheit des Hochgebirges paßt.") *ZDÖAV* (1917/18): 162.

⁴⁵⁰ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 148. "... verwirrt und kraus Denkenden."

⁴⁵¹ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 249. "Es war ein lächerliches Bergwandern ... Von der Erfahrung und Technik, die sich der Mensch im Laufe von Jahrzehnten zum Kampf mit den Bergdämonen erworben hatte, besaß Feltrinelli nichts. Er wußte nichts vom Seil und seinem Gebrauch, er führte nicht die eiszersplitternde Waffe des Pickels in de Faust – er war wie ein übermütiger Knabe, der in den niederen Felsen eines Steinbruches klimmt. Nur führte ihn nicht Übermut, sondern der Fanatismus einer Idee. Und in seinem Herzen zitterte nicht die scheue Ehrfurcht vor dem Gewaltigen, das ihn umgab, die Größe dieser steinernen Urwelt fand keine Brücke zu seinem Empfinden – er tollte dem monatelang erträumten Ziele nach, das ihm

Unlike Lauener and Hans, who enter the mountains as reverent acolytes, Feltrinelli blindly charges up the Schneewinkelhorn in an attempt to subdue the mountain to his will. And despite his possession of the iconic alpine tools – shoes, ice axe, and rope – Feltrinelli’s lack of skill, combined with the mad hubris that precludes proper comprehension of the mountain’s significance, leads him to fall to his death.

Feltrinelli’s suicidal attempt for the summit may also refer to the Italian occupation of South Tyrol in the Weimar period. Incapable of properly appreciating or comprehending the importance and significance of the mountains, Feltrinelli succumbs to hotheaded hubris and decides to take the Schneewinkelhorn as his personal trophy. Unlike Hans and Lauener, who have patiently approached the mountain in a respectful manner, Feltrinelli rashly hurls himself at the impassive mountain. The Schneewinkelhorn destroys Feltrinelli, suggesting that Italians are unfit to take part in the drama of mountain geography because of their inability to understand the divinity of alpine topography.

After Feltrinelli’s demise, Lauener and Hans make their own attempt to climb the Schneewinkelhorn. The narrative here serves as a corrective to Feltrinelli’s abortive bid for the summit. Where Feltrinelli was hasty, unskilled, and motivated by selfish desire, Lauener and Hans are patient, skilled, and approach the mountain with respect for its dangerous beauty. Before they can climb the Schneewinkelhorn, however, Lauener must come to an understanding with the eponymous Old One, an old man who serves as a gatekeeper in the mountains.

Lauener’s interactions with both Hügli and the Old One create the opportunity for Lauener to confront his dual impulses: to complete the engineering project, and to

die Krone seiner Kunst schien. Der Berg war ihm nicht ein Wunderbau der Schöpfung, sondern nur eine zufällige und gedankenlos zu überwindende Grundlage des Gipfels, jenes Platzes, auf dem er sein Werk vor den Pforten der Ewigkeit aufstellen wollte.”

preserve the “island of peaceful humanity” in Alpmatten. As the rapacious captain of industry, Hügli represents the side of Lauener that believes in technological innovation as an entirely positive development; as the caretaker of the mountain world and its inhabitants, the Old One speaks to Lauener’s worried concern for the future of Alpmatten. The Old One, however, exercises far more influence on Lauener than does Hügli; he teaches Lauener that “the mountains fulfill a man; they extinguish sadness and their phenomenal power can lead a man to new life.”⁴⁵² The Old One, as the mouthpiece of the mountains, seeks to lead Lauener to this new life, a life free of the complications and tragedies created by industrialization and modernization.

Lauener feels torn by his divided loyalties to his work and to the mountain folk. He views himself as a mediator between these two worlds: “his reason and his energies belonged to the project, but his heart belonged to the people of Alpmatten, whose uncrowned yet worthy king appeared to be the Old One.”⁴⁵³ The Old One warns Lauener, however, to keep the Italians out of Alpmatten: “brash faces stare into the windows of Alpmatten, they mock the simple dress and good old customs of the mountain folk – and the people of Alpmatten ball their fists in anger. Be careful! Once the storm breaks among these quiet folk, then they will destroy the good with the bad, including your project.”⁴⁵⁴ Lauener agrees with the Old One’s recommendation, but a confrontation looms on the horizon.

⁴⁵² Renker, *Heilige Berge* 130. “Sie verkünden damit, daß die Berge einen Menschen ganz ausfüllen, daß sie Trauriges auslöschen und ein ganzes Leben durch die Macht ihrer Erscheinung auf eine andere Grundlage führen können.”

⁴⁵³ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 135. “Er fühlte sich als Mittler zwischen beiden, denn sein Verstand und seine Kraft gehörten dem Unternehmen, sein Herz aber dem Volke von Alpmatten, dessen ungekrönter, ehrwürdiger König ihm der Einsame von Maria-Schnee schien.”

⁴⁵⁴ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 135. “Freche Gesichter lügen in ihre Fenster, spöttische Mäuler lachen über ihre derbe Tracht, über die alten Bräuche – die Männer von Alpmatten ballen die Fäuste, geben Sie acht! Wenn aus diesen schweigsamen Leuten einmal der Sturm losbricht, dann fegt er das Gute, Ihr Werk, mit dem Üblen fort.”

Lauener's role as mediator is put to the test when Hans is stabbed in the back by an unknown assailant. The weapon – “a stiletto knife, of the model that almost every Italian carried” – is found at the scene of the crime.⁴⁵⁵ The Old One's prophecy regarding the pent-up anger of Alpmatten nearly comes true as the Italians provoke the villagers, first by poking fun at one of their religious festivals, and then by setting fire to a hay barn. Yet Lauener, with the support of the Old One, manages to fend off the worst. As the villagers are about to blow up the dam with dynamite and all-out war threatens to break out, the Old One appears at the dam and tells the people of Alpmatten to go home, that they will not achieve anything with violence. As the villagers agree to let the police handle the Italian perpetrators, Hügli also decides to leave the project solely in Lauener's hands. Lauener is left in charge, and he uses his authority to enforce the compromises necessary to maintain the integrity of Alpmatten.

After the project is finished, Lauener sends the Italians away in what can be read as a fantasy of liberation from Italian occupation. Lauener and his staff live up by the dam, and he hires villagers from Alpmatten to maintain and operate the dam. Although Lauener will never be one of the Alpmatten villagers, he has managed a success that even Hans cannot ignore: “I suppose things have gotten better since we got electric lights in Alpmatten. We don't have to be so afraid of fire anymore. In the spring, I'm going to buy myself an electric threshing machine – that will save me time and energy.”⁴⁵⁶ Here is the ideal compromise between technology and tradition; the villagers can continue their way of life, living on the soil, assisted by the modern conveniences enabled by Lauener's

⁴⁵⁵ Renker, Heilige Berge 156. “Was Hans getroffen hat, ist ein Stilett, wie es fast jeder Italiener bei sich trägt.”

⁴⁵⁶ Renker, Heilige Berge 274. “'s ist auch besser, seit wir jetzt das elektrische Licht zu Alpmatten haben. Man braucht das Feuer nicht mehr so zu fürchten. Im Frühjahr kaufe ich mir eine elektrische Dreschmaschine – das spart Zeit und Kraft.”

engineering work. Their culture will live on, and Alpmatten will remain an uncorrupted “island of peaceful humanity.”

As for Lauener, his experiences in the mountains have given him a new perspective on the city below. After Feltrinelli’s death, which paves the way for Lauener to propose marriage to Rita, Rita decides that she wants to move to the city, away from the gossip and her unhappy past with Feltrinelli. The Old One and Lauener, however, dissuade her, convincing her that the city is not a place where she will be able to heal:

The city would not do you any good. You must heal both physically and spiritually. And you must be surrounded by people who take a loving interest in you. Above all, you must be able to speak with people. If you were among strangers, your loneliness would allow images of the past to consume you; the silence would strangle you.⁴⁵⁷

The alpine community of Alpmatten constitutes a powerful contrast to the urban city. Alpmatten hosts an ideal community that offers the physical healing of the alpine air and the spiritual healing of a supportive society. Rita listens to their advice, and she marries Lauener; together they live peacefully in the mountains.

Lauener has not forgotten his aspirations as a mountaineer, however, and nor has Hans. Now that all is calm in the valley, tradition and modernity reconciled, it is time for the two friends – the urban engineer and the alpine peasant – to achieve their shared goal: the climbing of the Schneewinkelhorn. Their weekly outings together have forged a bond between them, the storied “mountain camaraderie” that creates fast friendships. As they move up the mountain, roped together in the ultimate gesture of faith in each other’s skill and abilities, they are overcome by a sense of peace and purpose. Unlike Feltrinelli’s blind haphazard struggle to reach the summit, they proceed in quiet joy.

⁴⁵⁷ Renker, *Heilige Berge* 270. “Die Stadt täte dir nicht wohl. Du mußt auch körperlich, nicht nur seelisch gesunden. Und du mußt Menschen um dich haben, die an deinem Geschick liebenden Anteil nehmen. Du mußt über alles, was war, sprechen können. Die innerliche Einsamkeit unter Fremden würde vergangene Bilder grenzenlos in dir emporwuchern lassen, das Schweigen würde dich ersticken.”

When they reach the summit, they discover a diary. Upon reading its pages, they discover that its author is none other than the Old One, who had climbed the peak years before and left his testament there. The diary tells the Old One's story, and how he retreated from the world to live a life of solitude in the mountains. He grew lonely, however, and gradually came to know the villagers in the valley below, inadvertently becoming the spiritual leader of Alpmatten.

Their climb invests the mountain with multiple meanings. The Schneewinkelhorn is the highest peak in the surrounding mountain range, and Lauener and Hans's successful climb connotes that they have reached the zenith of their friendship. The mountain also serves as a geographical symbol of collaboration between tradition and modernity, denoting what is possible when modernization proceeds carefully and with respect for deep-rooted culture. Lastly, their climb symbolizes the compromise between the city and the countryside, and suggests how the mountain environment creates a space where the central conflicts of modern civilization – tradition and innovation, reason and religion, urban and rural – can be resolved harmoniously.

BERGKRISTALL (1930)

Where *Holy Mountains* imagines reconciliation, *Mountain Crystal* provides a more conflicted vision of the relationship between an alpine village and the forces of progress. The same forces are at work in both novels, however: greed, love, and above all the struggle for the preservation of the mountains.

Essentially a mystery-adventure novel set in an alpine environment, *Mountain Crystal* is an epistolary novel told from the perspective of a painter named Kurt Lüthi, who rents a cottage deep in the Alps to seek inspiration for his painting. Kurt becomes intrigued by a blue light that shines at night upon a high mountain cliff. Believing that the blue light emanates from a cave made entirely of crystal, illuminated by moonlight, Kurt

decides to find the cave, remove its natural treasure, and sell it to the highest bidder. Kurt is a man of modest means, and he believes, at least at the beginning of the novel, that these riches would ensure his marriage to Liane, a woman he has left behind in the city.

There is a catch, however. As Kurt begins asking questions in the nearby village of Hochwiler, he discovers that the ghost of a Spanish adventurer, who died long ago in an attempt to claim the cave's treasure, guards the cave. Although Kurt does not believe the villagers' superstitious tales, another obstacle stands in his way: the location of the cave's entrance. The blue light can only be reached by climbing a sheer rock face, which many of the locals consider an impossible feat; after examining the treacherous wall in his telescope, Kurt is forced to agree. He tries to put the cave out of his mind and concentrate on his painting, but, at night, his eyes are drawn irresistibly to the blue light.

Kurt eventually enlists the help of Jost Anderegg, a young man from Hochwiler. Jost is an experienced mountaineer, and Kurt asks Jost to show him around the alpine area near the blue light. After a number of failed attempts, Kurt and Jost, accompanied by Kurt's love interest, Liane, and her childhood friend and mountain guide Veit Rangetiner, manage to reach the cave. Much to their amazement, the cave is not filled with precious crystals; instead, it is a small glacial lake of water. There is a long tunnel that runs from the lake to the top of the mountain, through which the moonlight hits the water and casts the blue light upon the mountains. All of the intrepid climbers agree, however, that this natural treasure is worth more than any earthly wealth, and they are content to leave with the knowledge that they are the only human beings who have ever seen the subterranean tarn.

As they exit the cave, Liane is hit by a falling rock, and it is only through the superhuman efforts of the giant-like Veit Rangetiner that they are able to bring her back down to Kurt's hut. Watched over by Jost's sister, Regina, Liane recovers slowly, and at

the novel's end, Kurt and Liane purchase their alpine cottage, plan their expansions and renovations, and then go back to the city to gather their things for the move back. In the novel's closing scene, Kurt shakes hands with a formerly truculent villager; the last sentence of the novel reads, "we were once again good friends."⁴⁵⁸

The rapprochement at the end of *Mountain Crystal* revisits the major theme of *Holy Mountains*: the possibility of reconciliation between the city and the countryside. Yet there is much more at stake in this narrative than Kurt's change of heart, from greedy treasure-seeker to connoisseur of mountain beauty. *Mountain Crystal* raises a number of issues central to the mountaineering culture of interwar Germany.

As we saw in chapter one, concerns about the German nation played a central role in discussions about the significance of mountains for the reconstruction of the German *Volk*. In *Mountain Crystal*, the appearance of two university students offers a narrative excursion into the topic of Germany's defeat in World War I, as well as the consequences of this loss, and suggests how Germany is to move forward.

Kurt notices the students climbing the mountains near his mountain cottage, although he does not yet know who they are; he merely catches sight of them in his telescope as he looks for a way to reach the blue light. As night falls, Kurt becomes worried that these climbers may have gotten into trouble. He opens his cottage door, thereby allowing his lantern to act as a beacon for the weary travelers, and they arrive later, exhausted from their adventures. As the two young men arrive, Kurt realizes they are university students by their highly significant physiognomy: "they were two lively, thin youths, upon whose cheeks, burned by the mountain sun, ran long scars. The larger

⁴⁵⁸ Gustav Renker, *Bergkristall* (Basel: Friedrich Reinhardt, 1930) 269. "Wir waren wieder gute Freunde."

one's face bore deep scars on his forehead, cheeks and chin."⁴⁵⁹ These are not just university students; they are also members of a *Burschenschaft* (fraternity).

German fraternities, both before and during the interwar period, were famous as hotbeds of reactionary conservatism. These rabidly nationalist fraternities promoted dueling, and the scars that resulted from it, as a rite of passage into their ranks. Fraternities were also hotbeds of radical ideologies later promoted by the Nazis, including xenophobia, notions of 'pure' race, and visions of aggressive national expansion. Typically hailing from the ranks of the upper classes, members of these fraternities often followed in their wealthy fathers' footsteps, with many of them becoming high-ranking officers and powerful industrialists in the Third Reich.

Kurt's attitude toward these two students, however, is quite sympathetic. The students are currently on an alpine tour, climbing their way across the Alps. One of the students describes their adventure in strongly allegorical terms: whenever they see a mountain, they do not attempt to go around it; they climb it. Kurt's reflections on this plan indicate an awareness of its significance in both historical and national contexts, and, moreover, sympathy for the youths:

... Suddenly it occurred to me what kind of childhood both of these youths must have gone through. They grew up in the years of war and hunger; as they came into this world, expecting sun and light, the black storm of Germany's privation hung over them. And now they were children of a poor, small country that had to exist at the mercy of others.

Yet still they were able to raise themselves up, despite all difficulty and obstacles. They learned how to stand up for themselves, to forego help from others, to go forward boldly; whatever obstacles towered before them, they did not go around them, they did not try to avoid them. They had built their *Volk* a new, noble house. They and a hundred others like them.⁴⁶⁰

⁴⁵⁹ Renker, *Bergkristall* 188. "Es waren zwei lebige, gertenschlanke Burschen, über deren von der Bergsonne fast verkohlte Wangen langgezogene Narben liefen. Besonders der Große war an Stirn, Wange und Kinn gründlich zerhackt."

⁴⁶⁰ Renker, *Bergkristall* 194. "Einer Jugend – plötzlich fiel mir ein, wie die Kindheit dieser beiden hingegangen sein mochte. Ihre Entwicklungsjahre waren in die Zeit des Krieges und des Hungers gefallen;

The national allegory hinted at by the students becomes explicit in Kurt's inner monologue. In his initial expressions of admiration for these youths' role in building a new Germany, however, he leaves out a critical fact: these students are in fact Austrian.⁴⁶¹ Kurt's conflation of postwar Germany and Austria suggests that, since both countries shared the same fate in World War I, they will also rebuild themselves as one united Germany.

Renker's novel, however, does not simply articulate dreams of a Germanic empire comprised of Germany and Austria. Instead, *Mountain Crystal* suggests a geography of spiritual reunification: the mountains. It is in the alpine landscape that Renker addresses the question of *Heimat*, a German word that eludes any easy translation. *Heimat* translates literally as 'homeland,' yet *Heimat* generates a wide range of connotations. The concept includes a nostalgic longing for lost community, an idealization of the past that portrays the agricultural village as a forgotten idyll. The discourse of *Heimat* emphasizes the relationship between man and nature, suggesting that proximity to the soil and observance of the natural rhythm of the seasons offers a corrective to the dislocations of modern life. Where modern life is measured by the strict regimentation of time, as in wage labor, life in the *Heimat* is measured by the natural ebb and flow of seasonal change. *Heimat*, in other words, contains an implicit critique against forms of life divorced from the drama of the soil, favoring the farmer's familiarity with the timeless cycle of nature over modern man's alienation from the land.

als sie vom Leben Sonne und Licht erwarten durften, hatte die deutsche Not gewitterschwarz über ihnen gestanden. Und jetzt waren sie Kinder eines armen, kleinen Landes, das von fremder Gnade leben muß. Und dennoch – die erzogen sich selbst, allen Schwierigkeiten und Hindernissen zum Trotz. Lernten auf der Mensur für sich selber einstehen und fremde Hilfe ausschalten, gingen keck an, was sich sperrend vor ihnen auftürmte, nicht seitwärts herum, nicht unten durch. Die bauten ihrem Volk ein neues, stattliches Haus. Die und hunderte ihresgleichen."

⁴⁶¹ Renker, *Bergkristall* 197.

Kurt's struggle between his identity as an artist from the city and his desire to live in the mountains addresses the geographical and spiritual elements of *Heimat*. Painfully aware of his position as an outsider in the alpine village of Hochwiler, Kurt wrestles with the question of where he belongs: "if only I could call this cottage and these mountains my *Heimat*... but I am a man in search of *Heimat*. And now I am a stranger everywhere I go."⁴⁶² Kurt's alienation from both the city and his adopted mountain home remains incomprehensible to the local villagers, for whom *Heimat* is a simple fact of life: they were born in the mountains, and that is where they make their home. When Kurt tries to convince Regina, a local girl, of his sincere desire to join their alpine community, Regina rebuffs him: "you will return to the city, sooner or later. Because it is your true *Heimat*." Kurt responds, "the city can never be *Heimat*."⁴⁶³

Kurt's rejection of the city as the geographical site of *Heimat* results from his conviction that the urban environment is unnatural. In Kurt's logic, urban populations, disconnected from pristine nature, lead incomplete spiritual lives. This becomes clear as Kurt speaks to Regina about the proper way to raise a child:

No, Regina, if I had a child and he was especially intelligent, then I would try as hard as possible to interest him in agriculture. The farmer is more important to our *Volk* than any other profession. Because he has the most natural relationship with the earth – the epitome of what *Heimat* means.⁴⁶⁴

Kurt's emphasis on a "natural relationship with the earth" privileges the mountains as a landscape where close proximity to nature produces the qualities most essential to the

⁴⁶² Renker, *Bergkristall* 168. "Alles hätte ich leicht überwunden, wenn ich diese Hütte und ihre Berge *Heimat* nennen dürfte. – Ein *Heimatsucher* war ich. Und – 'bin ein Fremdling überall.'"

⁴⁶³ Renker, *Bergkristall* 172. "Ihr werdet einmal wieder in die Stadt müssen, früher oder später. Das ist denn doch eure *Heimat*"; "Die Stadt kann nie *Heimat* sein."

⁴⁶⁴ Renker, *Bergkristall* 197. "Nein, Regina, hätt' ich einen Buben und der wär' besonders klug, dann würde ich versuchen, ihn sachte und unmerklich zur Bäuerei zu lenken. Der Bauer ist unserem Volk noch immer wichtiger als alle anderen Berufe. Weil er die natürlichste Verbindung mit der Erde, mit der *Heimat* darstellt."

health of the national community. The mountains provide unmediated access to the secrets of the natural world, and Kurt wants to become part of this privileged community.

Kurt's friend Jost, however, yearns to leave the stifling confines of Hochwiler and go to the city. Jost, inspired by his friend, the retired teacher Kilian Moser, is a talented amateur musician and composer. His talents are underappreciated in Hochwiler, where he must complete back-breaking, time-consuming chores before he can sit down and practice on the organ at the local church. Through Kurt and Liane's intervention, however, he is invited to the city for a piano recital, where he performs brilliantly; so well, in fact, that he is offered a scholarship to the music conservatory in Vienna. When Jost returns from the city, however, he is quiet and emotionally distant; he realizes that, to follow his dreams, he must leave his beloved *Heimat*. Although he is torn by excitement and depression, he keeps in perspective the lessons he learned from his late father: "He told me that the wealth of the cities is great and beautiful, but that your perception depends upon the eyes with which you see it all. *Heimat* becomes all the more precious, then, whenever one returns to it from far away."⁴⁶⁵ Raised and educated in his *Heimat*, Jost is able to carry *Heimat* within himself, able to withstand the seductions of the city and return home with an even greater appreciation and love for his alpine homeland.

Yet, according to the novel, *Heimat* is a one-way street. As a child of the city, Kurt will never be inducted into the ranks of the alpine homeland; Jost, however, as a child of the mountains, can venture into the city and will only leave his *Heimat* in body, never in spirit. Indeed, Jost carries with him a "*Heimat* of the heart," a longing for his

⁴⁶⁵ Renker, *Bergkristall* 235. "Gottlieb Aerni hat mich gelehrt, daß der Reichtum der Welt auch in den Städten groß und schön ist, daß es nur auf die Augen ankommt, mit denen man die Dinge sieht, und daß die *Heimat* um so köstlicher wird, wenn man immer wieder aus der Fremde zu ihr zurückkehrt."

mountain village sweetened by the knowledge that his return will only increase his appreciation of his alpine *Heimat*.⁴⁶⁶

Kurt's exclusion from *Heimat* leaves him in a difficult position; he despises the city, yet he must acknowledge that he can never really leave it behind. Kurt originally goes to the mountains to seek inspiration and recharge his reservoirs of artistic ability. He describes this decision as a conscious "flight from the city and its agitation."⁴⁶⁷ The slower tempo of life suits Kurt well as he withdraws into his alpine hermitage; when he orders supplies to be delivered to his cottage, he is told that his things will arrive in a week, which occasions a meditation on the differences between the city and the mountains:

A week from today! Whenever I wanted something in the city, there was a store just down the street, the telephone hanging on the wall, and a taxi waiting on the street corner. Here in the mountains, an entire week lay between wish and fulfillment; the tempo of life is spread out and nothing is hurried...⁴⁶⁸

Kurt's preference for the glacial pace of mountain life, however, is tempered by the intimidating landscape: "I looked about at my new realm, and I must admit that my urban heart shrinks a little bit from the elemental mountains surrounding me, as if they were threatening to crush me."⁴⁶⁹ Kurt becomes accustomed to the overwhelming dimensions of his new environment, however, leading him to philosophize that the ancient way of life

⁴⁶⁶ Renker, *Bergkristall* 247. "*Heimat des Herzens*."

⁴⁶⁷ Renker, *Bergkristall* 9. "Ja, in die Einsamkeit wolle ich schon, erwiderte ich; aber vor allem sei es mir darum zu tun, der Stadt und ihrer Unrast zu entfliehen."

⁴⁶⁸ Renker, *Bergkristall* 12-13. "Die Woche darauf! Wenn ich in der Stadt etwas wollte, stand der nächste Laden offen, hing an der Wand des Ateliers der Fernsprecher und wartete an einer Straßenecke ein Taxameterauto. Hier liegt eine ganze Woche zwischen Wunsch und Erfüllung, hier ist das Tempo des Lebens weitgespannt, und nichts ist hastig..."

⁴⁶⁹ Renker, *Bergkristall* 19. "Mein neues Reich habe ich mir angesehen, und ein wenig ist mein lustiges Großstadtherz erstarrt vor dem Übergewaltigen ringsum, das meine kleine Menschlichkeit zu erdrücken drohte."

perpetuated in the mountain valley grants one an entirely different perspective on space: “back then, the world was even quieter and less populated than today, and the individual’s personal space was larger. Today, an individual is confined to his room, at best to his apartment – and outside the door, there swarm like ants the masses.”⁴⁷⁰ Unlike the teeming hordes of the city, the sparsely inhabited communities of the mountains have “a more loving understanding of the miracles of nature.”⁴⁷¹

Kurt’s love for the mountains, their temporal rhythm, their wide-open spaces, and their people leads him to criticize the city harshly. Kurt admits, “I no longer yearn for the city,”⁴⁷² and thinks of how the mountains have transformed him into a different person: “I have become someone else in these weeks, able to observe, without any distractions, the holiest purity of creation. I have fled from a desert of mendacity and empty social customs.”⁴⁷³ Kurt’s apostasy, however, must remain incomplete; as we have seen, he is a child of the city, excluded from the true experience of *Heimat*. Even as he voices his intent to purchase the cottage and live there year-round, he is told that the Hochwiler town council would not allow the sale. The town fathers would not permit an outsider to put down roots in their valley, no matter how pure his intentions.

Kurt manages to reach a compromise, however, that also serves as an imagined resolution for a dilemma that faced mountaineers and their organizations in the 1920s: how can people from the city enjoy the mountains without spoiling them? This question

⁴⁷⁰ Renker, *Bergkristall* 26. “... weil damals die Welt noch stiller und menschenleerer war als heute und das Reich des einzelnen größer. Jetzt ist das Reich des einzelnen ein Zimmer, bestenfalls eine Wohnung – vor ihrer Türe beginnt die ameisenkribbelnde Vielheit.”

⁴⁷¹ Renker, *Bergkristall* 25. “Wie oft bezeichnet das Landvolk gerade jene als verrückt, die sich liebevoller als der Durchschnitt mit den Wundern der Natur befassen.”

⁴⁷² Renker, *Bergkristall* 110. “Ich habe keine Sehnsucht nach der Stadt, heute weniger als je.”

⁴⁷³ Renker, *Bergkristall* 151. “Ich bin ein anderer geworden in diesen Wochen, da ich ohne Unterlaß in die heiligste Reinheit der Schöpfung blicken durfte. Aus einem Wust von Verlogenheit und gesellschaftlichem Firlefanzen bin ich entflohen.”

revolves around the relationship between tourism and the mountains. The rapidly increasing numbers of tourists flocking to the Alps since the turn of the century had led many to speculate that the Alps were being loved to death, that their pristine natural beauty and their quaint local customs were threatened by the masses from the city.

Kurt's question, then, is how to maintain a foothold in the geography of the mountains, thereby coming as close as possible to the landscape and the attainment of *Heimat*. After all, Kurt has developed friendly relationships in Hochwiler, where Regina comments,

when I heard that someone from the city was going to spend a few months up in the cottage, I was pleased. I thought to myself that whoever wants to get away from all of the evil in the city must be a brave and intelligent man. Not like one of these tourists that sometimes come through, leaving our gates open and making all kinds of noise.⁴⁷⁴

Despite Kurt's successes as an inadvertent ambassador from the city, many in Hochwiler know that he is merely the first of many to come, and those that follow may not be as good-natured and well-behaved as Kurt.

Jost's friend Kilian Moser, the retired schoolteacher, voices the village's fear of tourists and eventual urbanization. Moser describes the threat of modernization (which he calls 'the poison of the world') not only as the destruction of the landscape, but also of a way of life, of *Heimat*:

Look at the valleys of our country, flooded by strangers like Zermatt or Saas-Fee! What are the native inhabitants left with, what remains of their small quiet realm? Nothing or next to nothing. They are merely tolerated as they creep by, oppressed and poor, along the walls of some monstrous hotel. They don't understand the international business conducted there; all they see is the superabundance of wealth in contrast to their crushing poverty. You see, the people of Hochwiler

⁴⁷⁴ Renker, *Bergkristall* 66. "Als ich hörte, daß ein Städter monatelang allein auf die Wildalp ziehen wolle, freute ich mich und dachte mir, das müßte ein braver und kluger Mann sein, der sich hier von allem Üblen der Stadt losmachen wolle. Nicht so einer wie die Touristen, die manchmal vorbeikommen, alle Zaungatter offen lassen und lärmern."

don't know that they're poor – at least not in terms of the comparison between a mountain peasant and an English lord.⁴⁷⁵

The depredations of modernization would disrupt the societal fabric of the village, dividing the valley's inhabitants into haves and have-nots. Hochwiler wants none of these so-called improvements or developments. The alpine villagers simply want to continue living in their *Heimat*, unmolested by the outside world.

Despite the threat of mass tourism and the predatory social relations accompanying capitalism, the villagers agree to sell the cottage to Kurt and Liane. Kurt's friendships, along with his comprehension of the fragility and importance of their alpine *Heimat*, help to convince the villagers, but the decisive factor in Hochwiler's decision is an ostensibly generous offer made by Liane's extremely wealthy father. Kurt's understanding of *Heimat*, however, plays an essential role in the town's decision. They assume that he and Liane will continue to respect them and their way of life.

At the end of the novel, however, Liane and Kurt plan to expand and renovate their alpine cottage. They have hired workers from Hochwiler to add on a kitchen, install a proper stove and oven, and build new furniture for them. Much like the alpine huts of the various mountaineering clubs constructed in the late nineteenth century, Liane and Kurt's cottage will grow from a primitive shelter to a comfortable home with all the amenities of the city. The improvements made to the cottage signal the possibility of future visitors, a possible influx of tourists, and Kurt will even do the advertising himself: he has been offered an opportunity to show his alpine artwork at a gallery in an unnamed capital city.

⁴⁷⁵ Renker, *Bergkristall* 166. "Betrachten Sie die von Fremden überfluteten Täler unseres Landes, etwa Zermatt oder Saas-Fee! Was ist dort den Einheimischen noch geblieben, von ihrem stillen kleinen Reich? Nichts, fast nichts. Sie sind geduldet, schleichen gedrückt und arm an den Mauern der großen Hotels entlang, deren internationales Treiben sie nicht verstehen, deren Überfülle ihnen ihre Armut kraß vor Augen führt. Die Leute von Hochwiler wissen nicht, daß sie arm sind – wenigstens nicht arm im Sinne des Verhältnisses zwischen einem Bergbauern und einem englischen Lord" (166). Moser also calls this "das Weltgift."

The novel's ending is rather surprising, given the emphasis placed on the importance of preserving *Heimat* by protecting it from tourism and modernization. Yet the novel suggests that there is a better way to accommodate the needs of urban mountaineers in the Alps. *Mountain Crystal* describes a proper attitude toward the mountains that enables an acceptable compromise between tradition and modernity. For instance, Kurt's discovery that the blue light does not emanate from a lucrative crystal treasure trove, but rather from the natural wonder of a subterranean glacial lake, indicates the need for mountaineers to recognize that the mountains are not to be exploited for commercial gain; instead, they are to be enjoyed as pristine reserves of sublime beauty. Furthermore, Kurt's attitude is one of reverence for the mountains and the people who live in them. At the end of the novel, he does not expand the cottage into a hotel; he and Liane are simply building a modest vacation home so that they can maintain their ties with Hochwiler and its natural environment. And finally, Kurt's mountaineering achievement – scaling the impossible cliffs to reach the blue light – demonstrates his physical and spiritual fitness to participate, at least as a visitor, in the much-vaunted *Heimat* of Hochwiler.

Mountain Crystal, like *Holy Mountains*, offers imagined solutions to the dilemmas facing mountaineers and their organizations. Highly romantic depictions of mountains and mountain villages, the two novels attempt to instruct their readers in the proper comprehension of the mountains. For mountaineers to ensure the preservation of their cherished alpine landscape, they must simultaneously recognize their responsibility to protect *Heimat*. Their dual obligation is to act as mediators between the competing forces of tradition and modernity, like Walter Lauener, and to recognize the mountains as a national cultural treasure, the locus of an endangered *Heimat*, like Kurt Lüthi.

Although Renker's reconciliatory narratives reached thousands of readers, the mountain films produced in the 1920s and 1930s – some of them even based upon Renker's works – managed to reach an audience beyond the circles of armchair mountaineers. The mountain films offer an opportunity to explore how Renker's narrative resolutions compare and contrast with the visual representation of mountains, mountaineering and modernity. And as we shall see, the mountain films provoked a firestorm of controversy within an Alpenverein that felt itself threatened by the new medium of film.

Chapter 7: Alpine Cinema in the Weimar Republic

Three scenes from *Stürme über dem Mont Blanc* (*Storms over Mont Blanc*, 1930):

An airplane descends through the clouds, a man in leather cap and goggles at the helm. He stalls the engine and glides in circles around a weather station near the summit of Mont Blanc. He shouts down to the weather station attendant and promises that he will return at Christmas to bring him a postcard. As the plane begins to fall, he restarts the engine and banks toward the valley.

The mountaintop weather station contains objects from the past and the future. The attendant eats upon a checkered tablecloth spread over a heavy wooden table and warms the station with a wood-burning stove. Behind him, there is also a microphone on the primitive work desk, a radio, a transmitter, and a telegraph. The attendant is expert with both primitive and technological instruments.

The camera whispers through the antiseptic gleaming surfaces of an observatory. Cabinets covered in dials and switches line the walls, and great steel arches soar overhead to the dome. A chair sits positioned under an immense telescope that extends to the night sky. The shining silver mechanisms begin to move, the telescope approaches the chair, and a woman's hands, in soft focus, reach up and grasp the eyepiece as it descends. As woman and machine embrace, the camera comes into focus. She presses her eye to the telescope and peers into the darkness of the night sky.

Airplanes, radios, telegraphs and telescopes – all of these objects and their operators seem as though they should be out of place in the alpine context of the mountain film genre. The daredevil pilot, the isolated weather station attendant, and the lovely young astronomer are the main characters of Fanck's film, united only by the geographical space of Mont Blanc. And all of their professions are entirely dependent

upon the instruments of modernity, the tools of their respective trades. In this mountain film, technology is ubiquitous, whether in the gyroscopes of the weather station or the polished fuselage of the observatory.

Previous depictions in the alpine press of the Alps, overrun by technology, conjured up nightmare scenarios: planes, trains and automobiles swarming about the mountains, hordes of tourists issuing forth from luxury hotels to hike up to luxury restaurants, hydroelectric power plants generating electricity to illuminate formerly mysterious valleys with harsh artificial light. As we saw in chapter two, the mistrust of technological advance among the mountaineering community surfaced in debates about whether radios should be allowed in the alpine huts, whether railways and roads should be built into the Alps, whether new huts should receive electricity at all. Mountaineers feared that technology would harness the mountains, under the guise of progress, to the yoke of commercial tourism.

Mountain films such as *Storms over Mont Blanc*, however, represent the modernized Alps as a site of romance, drama and adventure – precisely the qualities that alpine organizations believed would be lost to the encroachment of tourism. In their own way, these films suggest compromises between the priorities of mountaineers and the prerogatives of progress, providing answers to the contemporary cultural struggles over the modernization of the Alps.

THE MOUNTAIN FILM GENRE

This chapter analyzes the German genre of the *Bergfilm* (mountain film), a genre that fascinated cinema-goers during the 1920s and 1930s. Titles such as *Der Berg des Schicksals* (*The Mountain of Fate*, 1924), *Der heilige Berg* (*The Holy Mountain*, 1925/26), *Die weisse Hölle von Piz Palü* (*The White Hell of Piz Palü*, 1929), *Stürme über dem Mont Blanc* (*Storms over Mont Blanc*, 1930) and *Das blaue Licht* (*The Blue Light*,

1932) brought dramatic action films set in the Alps to audiences in Germany and throughout the world.⁴⁷⁶ Despite the popularity of these films, efforts to revive the genre after 1945 failed, and the golden age of the mountain film remains firmly fixed in the German cinema of Weimar and the Third Reich.⁴⁷⁷

The genre of the mountain film is associated above all with three individuals: Dr. Arnold Fanck, Leni Riefenstahl and Luis Trenker. Arnold Fanck directed the majority of the mountain films, developing innovative camera techniques and a cinematic aesthetic that continued to exercise an influence long after the popularity of his mountain films. After enduring a childhood of ill health, Fanck's parents sent him to Davos in Switzerland, where Fanck experienced a complete recovery. Fanck attributed his physical and emotional emancipation to the mountains, describing the alpine landscape in terms of a healing recuperative space. During his alpine rambles, Fanck became interested in photography and later in film, where he became a pioneer in the cinematic representation of mountains.

Leni Riefenstahl's problematic history as the documentary filmmaker of the Third Reich often obscures her roots as a central actress and director in the mountain film genre.⁴⁷⁸ Riefenstahl was first introduced to the mountain film (and, incidentally, to the mountains themselves) when she happened upon a poster advertising Fanck's film, *The Mountain of Fate*. Riefenstahl described her reaction to the film in terms of an epiphany:

The very first images of mountains, clouds, alpine slopes and towering rock fascinated me. I was experiencing a world that I did not know, for I had never

⁴⁷⁶ Nancy P. Nenno, "Postcards from the Edge. Education to Tourism in the German Mountain Film" *Light Motives. German Popular Film in Perspective* Randall Halle and Margaret McCarthy, eds. (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2003) 62.

⁴⁷⁷ Christian Rapp, *Höhenrausch. Der deutsche Bergfilm* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1997) 251-253.

⁴⁷⁸ For an exhaustive discussion of Riefenstahl's film career in the Third Reich, see: Eric Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion: Nazi Cinema and its Afterlife* (Cambridge: Harvard UP, 1996) 27-31.

seen such mountains. I knew them only from postcards, on which they looked rigid and lifeless. But here, on the screen, they were alive, mysterious, and more entrancingly beautiful than I had ever dreamed mountains could be. As the film went on I became more and more spellbound. I was so excited that even before it ended I had made up my mind to get to know these mountains.⁴⁷⁹

This first encounter led Riefenstahl to star in many of Fanck's mountain films, including *The Holy Mountain*, *The White Hell of Piz Palü* and *Storms over Mont Blanc*. Riefenstahl also directed and starred in *The Blue Light*, which caught Hitler's attention and led to Riefenstahl's documentary productions in the Third Reich.

Luis Trenker also starred in and directed several mountain films, including two during the Third Reich (*Der verlorene Sohn* (*The Prodigal Son*), 1934; and *Der Berg ruft!* (*The Mountain Calls!*), 1938). An able and attractive mountaineer, Trenker often played the main male role in Fanck's films. Like Riefenstahl, Trenker was a favorite under the Nazis, although Trenker has been careful to point out his contentious relationship with Goebbels. Although Goebbels was quite enthusiastic about Trenker's film *Der Rebell* (*The Rebel*, 1932), Goebbels later expressed his extreme displeasure at Trenker's decision to stay in South Tyrol instead of in Nazi Germany; yet whatever Goebbels may have thought about Trenker, Hitler enjoyed his films nonetheless.⁴⁸⁰ Until Trenker's death in 1990, however, Luis Trenker managed to avoid the harsh criticisms levied at Riefenstahl and instead enjoyed an immense popularity that began with his early roles in the mountain films.

The mountain films were not the only offerings in the cinema that showed mountains on the big screen, but there were qualities unique to the *Bergfilm*. Unlike other genres, such as the *Heimat* film, the alpine landscape was not merely the diegetic space in

⁴⁷⁹ Leni Riefenstahl, *A Memoir* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992) 41-42.

⁴⁸⁰ Eric Rentschler, "There's No Place Like Home: Luis Trenker's *The Prodigal Son* (1934)" *New German Critique* 60 (Autumn 1993) 34.

which the story unfolded; instead, mountains became characters in their own right, central players in the film's development. The protagonists in the film battled against mountains as if against an opponent; the mountain intervenes in the visual and narrative space of the mountain film to determine the fate of its human adversaries. In one of Fanck's favorite devices, the associative montage, mountains could also become visual metaphors for the inner emotions of the film's characters. In *The Holy Mountain*, for example, the eponymous Friend (Luis Trenker), believing that his love (Leni Riefenstahl) has betrayed him, closes his eyes in a close shot immediately followed by a shot of an exploding mountain, thereby investing the elemental power of the mountain with powerful human emotions.

Melodramatic narratives, typically involving love triangles of two men fighting for the love of one woman, offered a great deal of emotional fare. Many viewers were exuberant about the alpine imagery on the screen but expressed exasperation and disappointment with the melodramatic plot lines. One of Weimar's foremost film critics, Béla Balázs, expressed the critical ambivalence toward the mountain films in his defense of Fanck's work: "There is a Dr. Fanck phenomenon, because people get very excited about him. Dr. Fanck is not praised, but loved; not criticized, but attacked."⁴⁸¹ Several critics, however, bemoaned Fanck's tendency towards melodrama, including the Weimar cultural critic Siegfried Kracauer, who acidly remarked on the "half-monumental, half-sentimental" jumble of "precipices and passions, inaccessible steeps and insoluble human conflicts."⁴⁸² Another reviewer complained that "the landscape sequences were

⁴⁸¹ Béla Balázs, "Der Fall Dr. Fanck" *Film und Kritik* 1 (1992) 4. "Es gibt einen "Fall Dr. Fanck," denn man regt sich auf über ihn. Dr. Fanck wird nicht gelobt, sondern geliebt, nicht kritisiert, sondern angegriffen."

⁴⁸² Siegfried Kracauer, *From Caligari to Hitler: A Psychological History of the German Film* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1947) 110, 257.

interrupted by a terribly banal feature film plot.”⁴⁸³ While the critics expressed their admiration for the mountain film’s visual elements and their condemnation of its narrative elements, it is important to note that the mountain film genre received wide acclaim across the political spectrum. Reviews from Social Democratic, Communist and Nazi newspapers, as well as trade journals, reveal that the films were seen and celebrated by a very diverse audience at the time.⁴⁸⁴

Since their premieres in the cinemas of Weimar and Nazi Germany, the mountain film has been subjected to thorough scholarly analysis. Many investigations of the genre depart from Siegfried Kracauer’s early verdict that the mountain film was a dress rehearsal for the aesthetics of fascism. Despite his suspicions of the mountain film’s proto-fascist leanings, Kracauer recalled the experience of viewing the films in the theatre as one of rapturous visual delight:

Whoever saw them will remember the glittering white of glaciers against a sky dark in contrast, the magnificent play of clouds forming mountains above the mountains, the ice stalactites hanging down from roofs and windowsills of some small chalet, and, inside crevasses, weird ice structures awakened to iridescent life by the torch lights of a nocturnal rescue party.⁴⁸⁵

Kracauer’s enjoyment of the cinematic spectacle, however, was mitigated by a retrospective awareness of a latent tendency towards “an anti-rationalism on which the Nazis could capitalize.”⁴⁸⁶ Following Kracauer, Susan Sontag also described the

⁴⁸³ *Die Rote Fahne* 30 (5 February 1931). Quoted in *Film und Kritik* 1 (1992) 83. “Die Naturaufnahmen werden aber von einer erschreckend banalen Spielfilmhandlung unterbrochen.”

⁴⁸⁴ Rentschler, “Mountains and Modernity” Relocating the *Bergfilm*.” *New German Critique* 51 (Special Issue on Weimar Mass Culture, Autumn 1990): 143.

⁴⁸⁵ Kracauer 111.

⁴⁸⁶ Kracauer 112.

mountain film as a precursor of fascism. In her 1974 essay, “Fascinating Fascism,” Sontag writes

No doubt thought of as apolitical when they were made, these films now seem in retrospect, as Siegfried Kracauer has pointed out, to be an anthology of proto-Nazi sentiments. Mountain climbing in Fanck’s films was a visually irresistible metaphor for unlimited aspiration toward a high mystic goal, both beautiful and terrifying, which was later to become concrete in Führer-worship.⁴⁸⁷

Sontag’s assessment further elucidates the unintended consequences of the mountain film: “the alpine fictions are tales of longing for high places, of the challenge and ordeal of the elemental, the primitive; they are about the vertigo before power, symbolized by the majesty and beauty of mountains.”⁴⁸⁸ In other words, the mountain films form part of a wider cultural discourse that laid the foundation for an appreciation of fascism in the German consciousness. By introducing film audiences to modes of anti-rationalism that privileged emotional reaction over critical reason, the mountain films unwittingly amplified the resonance of the fascist aesthetic.

Subsequent scholarship has acknowledged the link between the mountain films and the visual aesthetics of the Third Reich, but has focused more on the genre’s stylistic elements and devices, examining the films as a genre all their own. Eric Rentschler reminds us, however, that the mountain film must be situated within its historical context and considered as a cinematic intervention in wider cultural discourses of the Weimar Republic. While Rentschler notes that, “in the mountain film, we confront a spirit of surrender and heroic fustian which, without a doubt, anticipates Nazi irrationalism” – a judgment that adheres closely to those of Kracauer and Sontag – he also argues for a more nuanced approach to the significance of the genre on its own terms.⁴⁸⁹ Rentschler’s

⁴⁸⁷ Susan Sontag, *Under the Sign of Saturn* (New York: Farrar Straus Giroux, 1972) 76.

⁴⁸⁸ Sontag 86-87.

⁴⁸⁹ Rentschler 160.

suggestion that “to comprehend the *Bergfilm*, we must view it in the context of other Weimar fantasies that unreeled before audiences in the same movie houses,” situates the mountain film within its own historical Weimar context, divesting the films of their supposedly pre-fascist baggage so as to permit a more thorough aesthetic, thematic, and cultural-historical analysis.⁴⁹⁰

Rentschler was the first to point out that the films were well-received not only by nascent Nazis, but also by audiences of almost every political stripe in Weimar’s colorful and vibrant political culture. Whether Communist, Socialist, or National Socialist, film critics found the films entertaining and advised their respective publics to go to the cinema and see the spectacle for themselves. The wide acclaim of the films, Rentschler contends, indicates that Kracauer’s “one-way street from the cult of the mountains to the cult of the Führer leaves out some crucial attractions.”⁴⁹¹ Positioning the mountain films as imaginary resolutions of modern problems, Rentschler claims that this genre sought to achieve “a synthesis of mountains and machines, of natural force and technological power, of bodily energy and spiritual endeavor,” thereby resolving, albeit in filmic fantasy form, many of the socio-cultural ills that wracked Weimar Germany.⁴⁹² Through their presentation of the threats of modern life – the rise of technology, technocratic management policies, the growth of industry and the *Großstädte* – within the beautiful and culturally significant mountain environment, the mountain films presented an ideal world in which tradition and modernity could peacefully be resolved.

⁴⁹⁰ Rentschler 150.

⁴⁹¹ Rentschler 145.

⁴⁹² Rentschler 145.

This chapter focuses on the ways in which the mountain films represent alpine space and mountaineers. I examine the mountain films from the perspective of the mountaineering community, focusing on reviews and essays published in the alpine press. In their critiques of the mountain film genre, mountaineers indirectly expressed anxieties about the future of the Alps, about public attitudes towards mountaineering, and, most importantly, about the fragility of their control over alpine representations. The extensive publications generated by mountaineering organizations had ensured a sort of monopoly on how mountaineers and their craft were depicted, but this dominance over how the German-speaking public understood mountaineering was fading fast under the more easily accessible media of photography and film. Mountaineers were intensely interested in how they were being portrayed in the cinema, and what they saw there often upset them. Mountaineers' debates over the mountain films suggest that they found the new world of visual culture threatening to their primarily textual hegemony over the cultural significance of mountains and mountaineering, and they fought back tooth and nail to preserve their dominance in alpine representation.

BETWEEN LITERATURE AND FILM

The Alps have long been the subject of visual representations in a variety of contexts. In England, the entertainer Albert Smith was the first to realize the dramatic potential of mountaineering. Smith's variety show began its run in 1851. His stage, covered with iconic alpine items such as backpacks and hiking sticks, invited audiences to imagine themselves ascending Mont Blanc; at intermission, St. Bernards lumbered about the auditorium with chocolates in barrels hanging from their necks. Smith's show was an enormous success; by 1853, it had become something of an institution, with over 200,000 visitors and £17,000 in gross receipts. Ever since Albert Smith's successful

theatrical run in England, mountaineers in other countries sought to reach an ever broader audience.⁴⁹³

In Germany, beginning in the late nineteenth century, mountaineers presented their explorations and exploits in narrated slide shows. These public talks were advertised in both the Alpenverein's own publications and the popular press. At these lectures, the mountaineer would typically present photographs of his alpine adventures while describing his climb, thereby mixing textual and visual genres to communicate the alpine experience to the audience. As the cultural anthropologist Bernd Tschofen has noted, these slide shows, which reached their peak popularity before the beginning of the Weimar Republic, suggests the continuity of a fascination with the visual representation of mountains and mountaineering which reached its pinnacle in the *Bergfilm* genre.⁴⁹⁴

The transition from textual to cinematic alpine representation was by no means smooth. Debates about the representation of mountains and mountaineering, which certainly exhibited their own particular nuances, were carried out in the context of wider debates about literature, cinema and culture in the Weimar Republic. As the film scholar Anton Kaes has noted, during the 1920s, cinema challenged the traditional alignment of the written word with culture, and "as the new medium gained power, it threatened literature's monopoly and destabilized the contemporary cultural system."⁴⁹⁵ Early film critics expressed concerns about the disempowerment of literature as a cultural institution, as well as the waning power of the high arts to act as a power for reform.

⁴⁹³ Peter Holger Hansen, "Albert Smith, the Alpine Club, and the Invention of Mountaineering in Mid-Victorian Britain." *Journal of British Studies* 34.3 (1995): 300-324.

⁴⁹⁴ Bernhard Tschofen, *Berg, Kultur, Moderne. Volkskundliches aus den Alpen* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 1999) 93.

⁴⁹⁵ Anton Kaes, "The Debate about Cinema: Charting a Controversy (1909-1929)" *New German Critique* 40 (Special Issue on Weimar Film Theory, Winter 1987): 7.

Poetry and literature had long been considered the domain of the educated upper middle class, in terms of both production and consumption; film, on the other hand, was rapidly evolving outside of the tenets of the publishing market. Kaes point out that

the critique of film as trivial mass culture had primarily economic grounds. The reform-oriented literature of the 1910s perceived cinema's advance into the literary domain as a threat: the institution of literature stood the risk of losing the culturally dominant middle class to cinema.⁴⁹⁶

One of the reasons that literature faced the loss of its readership to the cinema involved the perceived ease with which viewers could take in an image, as opposed to reading. Arguments to this effect implicitly referred to discourses about tension, exhaustion and fatigue; unlike the exertion of reading, viewing a film could save energy for other activities. One commentator described the early conflict between textual and visual apperception as follows:

We no longer want to string together staid letters into words, which, because we have to spell them and grasp their meaning, strain the mind; instead, we want to enjoy our reading in pictures without effort. ... The public has put aside the dull and dry book; the newspaper is quickly skimmed, and in the evening, the hunger for images is satisfied in the cinema.⁴⁹⁷

This “hunger for images,” as many scholars have noted, extended far beyond the confines of the cinema house; the surfaces of everyday life, including bus stops, display windows, electric lighting and architecture, became surfaces of visual representation in the service of hitherto-unknown commercialism.⁴⁹⁸

In mountaineering, similar developments were taking place. In a tradition reaching back well into the nineteenth century, mountaineers had written first-hand

⁴⁹⁶ Kaes 18.

⁴⁹⁷ Anon., “Neuland für Kinematographentheater” *Lichtbild-Bühne* 3 (September 1910): 3. Quoted in Kaes 23.

⁴⁹⁸ See Janet Ward, *Weimar Surfaces. Urban Visual Culture in 1920s Germany* (Berkeley: U of California P, 2001).

accounts of their exploits, publishing travel reports, climbing guides, instructional materials as well as philosophical essays in a wide variety of publishing venues, including the Alpenverein's own journals and several mountaineering trade presses in Munich and Vienna. As we have also noted, there was a significant niche market for literary works set in the Alps, including the alpine novels of Gustav Renker and several others. Numerous weeklies dedicated to mountaineering appeared in the 1920s, including *Der Bergsteiger*, the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung*, the *Deutsche Alpenzeitung*, *Der Natufreund* and many others. Well into the 1920s, the cultural world of mountaineering remained primarily textual in nature.

By the end of the 1920s, however, the increasing prevalence and power of the alpine image had become impossible to ignore. The educated upper-middle class membership of the Alpenverein, and its collective privileging of the written word, collided with the flood of images pouring out of tourism agencies, illustrated weeklies and, most importantly, the cinema.⁴⁹⁹ As the mountaineer Joseph Moriggl noted in 1929, the primarily visual character of representation in the Weimar Republic threatened to supplant the written, and even the spoken, word: "Pictures, pictures, pictures! – anything but reading, that is the call of our time, the age of the journals. At the slide show presentations, it's the same; reading or listening attentively is much too stressful."⁵⁰⁰ In the same article, Moriggl noted the increasing clamor for developing the Alpenverein's standard publications, the *Zeitschrift* and the *Mitteilungen*, into illustrated weeklies. Even

⁴⁹⁹ The tourist industry sometimes used film as advertisement for alpine travel. The documentary film series, "Im Postkraftwagen durch Österreichs Alpenwelt" ("Austria's alpine world as seen from the post coach"), produced between 1927 and 1930, "was pioneering in its industry and certainly made an impact." Wolfgang Straub, *Willkommen. Literatur und Fremdenverkehr in Österreich* (Vienna: Sonderzahl, 2001) 41.

⁵⁰⁰ J. Moriggl, "Zehn Jahre Vereinsgeschichte, 1919-1929" *ZDAV* 60 (1929) 325. "Bilder, bilder, bilder! – nur nicht lesen, das ist der Ruf der heutigen Zeit, der Zeit der Journale. Bei den Vorträgen ist es ja ebenso; lesen oder aufmerksam zuhören, ist viel zu anstrengend."

the Alpenverein's members, it seems, were not immune to the lure of visual alpine representations.

EARLY DEBATES ON ALPINE FILM

Before the mountain film became a popular genre, critics in the alpine press were already envisioning the ideal alpine film. The first discussion of the role of mountains and mountaineering in film was an article by the author Theodor Heinrich Mayer, published in the inaugural edition of the mountaineering journal *Der Berg* in 1923. Mayer's brief essay inspired responses from two other major alpine publications: the *Mitteilungen* of the German-Austrian Alpenverein and the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung*. Both of these responses indicate mountaineers' significant interest and investment in the representation of mountaineering in the cinema of Weimar Germany.

The issue of whether or not such representations were authentic formed the center of this debate about alpine cinema. Hans Barth, a prolific author and mountaineer whose essays appeared frequently in the publications of the German-Austrian Alpenverein, criticized Mayer's article strongly in his essay, "Die Berge im Film" (1923).⁵⁰¹ According to Barth, Mayer's critique "defends the right of these so-called alpine films – as long as these cinematic representations are sufficiently artistic – to deceive audiences with made-up situations, misleading ideas about mountaineering's essential qualities, and misrepresentations of how ascents are done."⁵⁰²

Barth's conceives of the alpine film as a combination of two genres of Weimar cinema: the *Naturfilm*, a documentary film genre that dealt with educational topics such

⁵⁰¹ Hans Barth, "Die Berge im Film," *MDÖAV* (1923): 70-71.

⁵⁰² Barth 70. "... das Recht verteidigt, bei sogenannten Alpenfilmen unter Vorspiegelung falscher Tatsachen den Zuschauern einen falschen Begriff vom Wesen des Bergsteigens überhaupt und insbesondere vom Verlauf einer bestimmten Bergfahrt geben zu dürfen, wenn nur dabei künstlerischer Darstellung genügt wird."

as landscapes or the animal kingdom, and the *Spielfilm*, or feature film. While nature films provided “showcases of landscape *images*,” feature films offered “scenes of movement, *life*.”⁵⁰³ Barth proposes that alpine film should combine these elements, showing authentic mountaineering action within the visual context of the mountain landscape. Barth expresses his doubts, however, about films that overly rely on dramatic narratives and special effects detrimental to the cinematic representation of unmediated reality:

... cinematic art has its limits on representation, just like the other visual arts of painting and sculpture. These boundaries are found at the point where disingenuousness, explanations and apologies become necessary to cover up the fact that the possibilities of expression have been exhausted – which is so often the case with today’s alpine films.⁵⁰⁴

One such case of extending a film beyond its boundaries of authenticity involves the representation of the mountaineer. Barth argues that the actor and the alpinist cannot be compared; where the alpinist conducts himself with stoic patience and experienced skill, the “cinematic alpinist” employs “forced emotions and exaggeration” to achieve dramatic effect. With their overemphasis on drama, alpine films fail to capture what Barth considers to be the true character of the mountaineer.

The misrepresentation of the mountaineer and his craft drew Barth’s scorn. Mayer had speculated earlier that much of the criticism directed at alpine film by the mountaineering community was motivated by “the jealousy of those who are less

⁵⁰³ Barth 70. “... *nur* landschaftliche Schaustücke, *Bilder*...” “... bewegte Szenen, *Leben* ...”

⁵⁰⁴ Barth 70. “Nun, darauf muß entgegnet werden: auch die Filmkunst hat ihre Grenzen und kann so wenig wie die anderen hohen bildenden Künste, Malerei und Plastik, Alles und Jedes darstellend wiedergeben, und diese Grenze ist eben dort, wo zu Unaufrichtigkeit gegriffen werden muß, wo erst Erklärungen, Apologien die erschöpften Ausdrucksmöglichkeiten unterstützen müssen, wie solche just der Film so ausgiebig braucht bei seinen Darstellungen.”

capable” of producing a proper mountain film.⁵⁰⁵ Barth retaliated with his assertion that real mountaineers could not help but be insulted by the characters they saw on the screen:

Such emotional absurdities are supposed to be accepted by the film-going mountaineer? He is supposed to view these idiots on the screen – despite the worst violations of mountaineering customs and proper alpine techniques – as exemplary heroes, as *Höchstkönnner* (the most capable)!⁵⁰⁶ (71).

The real danger of presenting alpine heroes without any real expertise or self-mastery, however, was not merely the affront to the mountaineer’s sensibilities. Barth suggested that a mountaineer who rejected such alpine films was not just somehow unable to appreciate the films’ artistic merits; rather, he was “a person whose five senses are in fine working order and does not appreciate manipulation and confusion; a friend both of nature and humanity, who protests against misrepresentation, against stupification, and above all against compromise.”⁵⁰⁷

Mountaineers, at least, were able, on the basis of their extensive alpine experience, to properly judge whether mountaineering scenes in film were realistic or not. For the theater-going public unfamiliar with alpinism, however, unrealistic representations of mountaineering were not merely misleading; they were also dangerous and potentially life-threatening. The primary threat posed by alpine film, Barth wrote, was that “a lay audience could sit through such a film, seeing and learning all manner of

⁵⁰⁵ Quoted in Barth 71. “... Neid des Minderkönnner.”

⁵⁰⁶ Barth 71. “Solche Gefühls- und Sinnwidrigkeiten werden aber ins Alpinistische übertragen dem Bergsteiger als Filmbetrachter zugemutet, und er soll sogar trotz der grassersten Verstöße gegen alpinistischen Brauch und sportgerechte Technik den Zappelmann auf der Lichtfläche als vorbildlichen Helden, als ‘Höchstkönnner’ gelten lassen!”

⁵⁰⁷ Barth 71. “Wer also zu solchen Vortäuschungen ‘Nein!’ sagt, ist kein zünftischer Nörgler, kein hämischer Neidhammel, sondern ein Mensch, dessen fünf Sinne in Ordnung sind und sich nicht verwirren lassen wollen; ein Natur- und Menschenfreund, der gegen Entstellung und Verdummung, vor allem gegen Gefährdung, aufmuckt.”

incorrect technique and conduct.”⁵⁰⁸ Young and impressionable members of the audience were particularly vulnerable to the alpine film’s erroneous portrayal of mountaineering; Barth hinted that they might watch a film and try afterwards to imitate the impossible and dangerous deeds they had seen. Barth proclaimed that this was the primary reason “why we honorable mountaineers universally reject such alpine films, which we deem to be dangerous.”⁵⁰⁹ Mountaineers were supposed to mentor the next generation of alpine enthusiasts, inculcating respect for the mountains and for one’s own abilities. Alpine films, however, usurped this role and encouraged reckless behavior. According to Barth, mountaineers bore the responsibility of identifying and limiting the possibly damaging consequences of watching an alpine film.

Barth held out hope, however, that a truly great alpine film was still within the realm of possibility. Barth outlines his vision of the “good” alpine film in the following passage:

[A good alpine film] must not only be artistic, but also authentic and true to the alpine technique. If the alpine film, like the nature film, portrays natural scenery and moods in artistically rendered images, then an occasional exaggeration of alpine action – as long as it remains a non-essential element of the film – should not interfere with the audience’s enjoyment of the film [...] As soon as the sportive elements of alpinism become the film’s primary focus, and the landscape the context in which these feats are situated, then our judgment of alpine film’s merits will change accordingly.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁸ Barth 71. “Denn die Hauptsache bei diesem Humbug – es gilt nicht allgemein! – ist nämlich, daß durch die Vorführung so fehlerhaften Verhaltens die mit der Sache weniger Vertrauten Falsches sehen und lernen.”

⁵⁰⁹ Barth 71. “Und deshalb vor allem machen wir ehrlichen Bergsteiger gegen solche Alpenfilme Front, die wir für gefährlich erachten.”

⁵¹⁰ Barth 71. “Wir begrüßen den *guten* Alpenfilm freudigst. Der muß aber nicht nur künstlerisch, sondern auch wahr und sporttechnisch richtig sein. Wenn der Naturfilm, als solcher auch der Alpenfilm, die Natureindrücke und –Stimmungen künstlerisch in vollendeten Bildern darstellt, wird die etwa vorhandene falsche sportliche Szenerie – solange sie *nebensächliche Staffage* bleibt – gewiß nicht stören. [...] Sobald jedoch die *sportliche Darstellung zur Hauptsache* wird und die Natur zum Rahmen, wechselt auch dementsprechend die Beurteilung.”

The privileging of realistic alpine endeavor, Barth stresses, enables the alpine film to be both “an artwork and an opportunity for education.”⁵¹¹ Balance between demands for artistic visual content and exciting adventure sequences, Barth argues, satisfies the audience’s desire for aesthetic and narrative entertainment.

Barth’s final word on the topic of alpine film alludes to the wider discourse of Americanism in Weimar cinema. Urging filmmakers to continue striving to make a quality alpine film, Barth warns against the lure of sensationalism. Special effects, artificial narrative tricks and inauthentic mountaineering stunts are only shoddy attempts to make a profit. The real alpine film, Barth implies, need not rely on improbable situations or unrealistic sequences; instead, filmmakers should eschew these dramatic techniques and have faith in the inherently awe-inspiring aspects of the mountain landscape and the mountaineers who move within it.

The critique of alpine film that appeared in the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* corresponded in large degree with Barth’s essay in the Alpenverein’s *Mitteilungen*, even though the former avoided Barth’s rhetorical hyperbole about the endangerment of youth. Nonetheless, L. Landl’s article, “Alpinistik im Film” (“Alpinism in Film”), agrees with Barth’s concerns on one crucial point: film’s interference in the alpine community’s self-representation.

Landl asserts that it is the mountaineering community’s responsibility to combat the misrepresentation of alpinism in the cinema. Although the films “portray the majesty of the Alps to the urban masses, who for any number of reasons cannot enjoy the Alps on their own hikes and tours,” Landl accuses alpine films of turning mountains “into a playground for some very odd heroes and heroines.”⁵¹² Landl argues that alpine films

⁵¹¹ Barth 71.

⁵¹² L. Landl, “Alpinistik im Film,” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* (1 June 1923): 1. “Vorführungen von Landschaftsbildern sind vom bergsteigerischen Standpunkte aus zu begrüßen, weil sie es möglich machen, auch jener Großstadtmenge die Pracht unserer Alpen vor Augen zu führen, der es aus mancherlei Gründen

should represent the activities and achievements of mountaineers, not indulge in sentimental dramatization and kitschy plots.

Like Barth, Landl also dispenses with the notion that the only critical approach to alpine film involves its artistic merits. Landl points out that Mayer only permits mountaineers one angle of criticism: “whether the images are acceptable from a purely artistic perspective, whether the characters fit into the overall film, whether the lighting achieves a harmonious visual effect, etc.”⁵¹³ To the contrary, Landl suggests that there are a healthy number of possible critiques, most of them focusing on the film’s veracity:

Such a critique doesn’t even address multiple questions: which mountains are actually being filmed, that the entire scene is only made for the sake of special effects, that images of different mountains are cobbled together, despite the specificity of the film’s title ‘The Ascent of Mountain X’, which confuses the audience; in short – that no one is allowed to use the word ‘fraudulent film’ (*Filmschwindel*) to describe these shams, these so-called pieces of art where producers and actors are obsessed with nothing more than success (meaning earnings).⁵¹⁴

For Landl, the true alpine film would not indulge in editing tricks; instead, it would be a faithful record of a real mountaineering event or expedition. In a comparison between audience expectations for alpine film and another popular genre, the detective film, Landl confirms that authenticity should be the watchword for the narratives of alpine cinema. Unlike detective films, “which demand the speculative instincts of the masses and the

nicht möglich ist, sich an dieser auf eigenen Wanderungen zu erfreuen... die Berge wurden zum Tummelplatze manchmal ganz merkwürdiger Helden und Heldinnen.”

⁵¹³ Landl 1. “Der Verfasser vertritt die Anschauung, daß uns Bergsteigern nur *eine* Kritik zusteht, nämlich ob das Bild vom künstlerischen Standpunkte aus einwandfrei ist, das heißt, ob sich die Figuren dem Ganzen anpassen, ob die Lichtverteilung harmonisch ist, usw...”

⁵¹⁴ Landl 1. “... Nicht aber die Kritik, daß eine solche Wegstelle auf der ganzen Besteigung dieses bekannten Berges gar nicht vorkommt, daß die ganze Szene nur des Effektes willen “gemacht” ist, daß die Bilder von verschiedenen Bergen zusammengetragen sind und trotzdem der Titel “Die Besteigung des X-Berges” das unwissende Publikum irreführen darf, kurz, daß man nie das Wort “Filmschwindel” gebrauchen darf, wenn sich die Filmaufnehmer und auch Darsteller gewisser “Kunststücke” bedienen, um dem Film auch den nötigen Erfolg (Ertrag) zu verschaffen.”

introduction of false narrative trails,” alpine films must be truthful records of alpine endeavors.⁵¹⁵

Like Barth, Landl believes that the greed of the film industry motivates the sensationalism of alpine cinema. Alpine narratives become star vehicles for “cinematic alpinists,” as Landl makes clear in his remarks on the uncomfortable position of the mountaineer as a movie star. “Unlike the bullfighter or football player,” the mountaineer, “who goes about his craft in the companionship of a very limited number of like-minded persons ... does not need the fanatical screams and applause of an audience to spur him on.”⁵¹⁶ The mountaineer’s inherent modesty and introspective nature preclude a true representation of the mountaineer in cinema; the moment a mountaineer appears on a screen, he is no longer a mountaineer.

The physical arrangement of spectators and spectacle in the cinema, Landl insinuates, is anathema to alpine film; mountaineers go into the mountains in small intimate groups, while alienated audiences throng to theaters to watch a film with strangers. These two modes of spectatorship – the small cluster of individuals and the mass audience – have different effects on the viewers. For mountaineers, the experience of being in the mountains in small groups enhances friendships; for urban theater-goers, the experience of seeing mountains on the big screen alienates them from the much-vaunted camaraderie of mountain climbing.

Barth and Landl’s critiques of alpine film, however, gloss over many of the tensions of the *Bergfilm* genre. The mountain films represented mountains and

⁵¹⁵ Landl 1. “Was beim Detektivdrama vielleicht gestattet ist, die Spekulation auf die Instinkte der Massen, die Erweckung falscher Vorstellungen, darf beim Alpenfilm, der, wie der Verfasser selbst betont, ein Kunstwerk sein muß, nicht erlaubt sein.”

⁵¹⁶ Landl 1. “Der Bergstieger, der seine Arbeit höchsten in Gesellschaft weniger Gleichgesinnter verrichtet, bedarf nicht, wie der Stierkämpfer oder Fußballspieler, des fanatischen Geschreies und einer Beifalls-Zuschauermenge, um seine Leistung anzuspornen...”

mountaineering in complex ways that were not meant to satisfy the needs of the mountaineering community. Instead, the mountain films negotiated many of the modern dilemmas facing Weimar audiences. How were Germans to reconcile the dialectics of tradition and modernization? How were they to come to terms with new configurations of masculinity and femininity? How were Germans to resuscitate or reformulate notions of heroism and nationalism in the wake of their defeat in World War I? The mountain films offered highly nuanced answers to these questions, and many more. The following discussion concentrates on key themes of the mountain films and discusses how the films represent, in both their visual and narrative elements, ambivalent answers to the challenges of modernity.

ALPINE SPACE IN THE MOUNTAIN FILM

The progressive encroachment of modernity in the Alps is chronicled throughout successive films of the mountain film genre. As we saw in chapter two, the arrival of mass tourism, with its luxury hotels, hydroelectric power plants and railroads, threatened the pristine playground of the Alps. Mountaineers viewed these developments with alarm, fearing that the Alps might be overrun by masses of tourists and spoiled by over-development. The real transformations occurring in alpine space during the Weimar Republic were also an important subject in the mountain film, and it is important to consider how these changes were represented to a mass audience and how they differed from the Alpenverein's official version of events.

Arnold Fanck's feature film *The Holy Mountain* (1924/25), starring Luis Trenker and Leni Riefenstahl, revolves around the theme of incompatibility in two spatial contexts: between gender-coded landscapes of the ocean (feminine) and mountains (masculine), and between the city below and the heights above. The film's opening set pieces depict two vigorously masculine mountain climbers atop a remote peak, smoking

pipes and playing accordion on a tiny summit. This is followed by an extended sequence in which Riefenstahl's character, Diotima, performs her "dance to the sea," mimicking the rolling waves of the water with her own body. From the beginning, the film associates men with hardness and strength, and women with plasticity and flow. Indeed, part of the film's narrative tension derives from the incompatibility of the mountain man and the urban woman; the longing for an impossible resolution between stone and water motivates the characters in their pursuit of ill-fated love.

More important for our analysis, however, is the juxtaposition of urban civilization and alpine wilderness. The "Friend" (Trenker) accompanies his friend Vigo to a luxury hotel, where he sees Diotima dance for the first time. Were it not for the earlier shots depicting Vigo and the Friend in the mountains nearby, it would be impossible for the audience to know that the theater is located in the Alps; cars drive up to the front of the theater and are parked by valets, throngs of theater-goers in tuxedos and evening dresses stream into the impressive-looking theater with its Greek columns and imposing architecture. Once inside, we see Vigo and the Friend sitting in a balcony box, watching as members of the dignified audience take their seats. Their higher position as spectators indicates the real balance of power here in the alpine resort; the black tie crowd may take the best seats in the city, but here, mountain men in traditional alpine clothing assume the role of master.

The contrast between the luxury resort and the alpine village becomes all the more striking when Diotima goes on a leisurely hike up to the village where the Friend lives. In a succession of shots, Diotima is shown traipsing around an idyllic alpine environment, romping through alpine meadows, petting sheep and laughing with alpine children. Diotima's careless whimsicality has led the Germanist Nancy Nenno to the conclusion that Fanck intended to make Diotima look ridiculous, claiming that "the

audience should recognize the trope of the urban tourist but reject this figure in favor of identifying with the romantic tourist represented by The Friend.”⁵¹⁷ Whether one agrees or disagrees with Nenno’s reading of the film, this sequence of shots neatly summarizes the stereotypical alpine experience advertised by the tourist industry: primitive villages, pristine landscapes, magnificent mountains.

The incompatible nature of these two spaces – the luxury resort and the alpine village – is reified in the ill-fated love between the Friend and Diotima. An old woman from the village even warns the Friend explicitly that “the sea and the stone shall never be wed.” Although the Friend will die before he can marry Diotima, a fascinating sequence suggests the possibility of an imagined resolution of their dilemma. Unable to be together in the physical world, the Friend experiences a hallucinatory vision in which he joins Diotima in a cathedral of ice, an imagined landscape where their love is possible. Yet even this fantasy space cannot contradict reality; at the end of the Friend’s vision, the altar at which they are to be married explodes, and the Friend awakes from the dream to walk off the precipice to his death.

In Fanck’s *Storms over Mont Blanc* (1930), a similar dynamic dominates the representation of urban and mountain space. Unlike *The Holy Mountain*, however, *Storms over Mont Blanc* presents less a romantic expressionist fantasy than a gleaming paean to technology. Radios, airplanes, telegraphs and telescopes abound in *Storms over Mont Blanc*, and it is essential that we understand how these props affirm and challenge the visual traditions of alpine representation.

Representations of technology in the mountain films intersected with historical debates about the role that technology should play in the mountains. As we saw in

⁵¹⁷ Nancy P. Nenno, “Postcards from the Edge. Education to Tourism in the German Mountain Film” *Light Motives. German Popular Film in Perspective* Randall Halle and Margaret McCarthy, eds. (Detroit: Wayne State UP, 2003) 61-84. Here at 70.

chapter two, mountaineers believed that the Alps were in danger of extinction as the railroads brought increasing numbers of tourists to luxury resorts. In *Storms over Mont Blanc*, technology is no longer an alien presence; instead, iconic items such as radios and airplanes are presented as integrated features of the Alps.

The film's opening scenes suggest how technology should be accommodated in the alpine environment. The film begins with a shot of Mont Blanc and cuts to a shot of an alpine hut, followed by the image of a fire warming someone's hands. This series of shots establishes an iconography familiar to anyone in the audience who had spent time in the Alps, from panoramic landscape views to the *gemütlich* interior of an alpine hut. The camera pans up to Hannes (Sepp Rist), who smiles while he warms his hands; his handsome, chiseled profile corresponds to the masculine ideal of the mountaineer. Thus far, a standard set of images has established the diegetic space of the film (mountains, alpine huts) and the mountain man who will occupy the center of the story.

When Hannes leaves the hut and trudges through the snow to a weather station, the audience has its first glimpse of modern technology. A close-up of a meteorological device is followed by a medium shot of Hannes as he writes down the instrument's readings. As if to compensate for the unusual association of the mountain man with modern implements, a shot of an ice axe planted in the snow returns the audience to familiar iconographic terrain. The juxtaposition of the ice axe and the gyroscope suggests a reconciliation between the traditional and the modern, positioning Hannes as a new type of mountaineer equally at home with wood fires and scientific instruments.

Upon his return to the hut, Hannes demonstrates his technological proficiency in a sequence of shots within the hut's heavy wooden interior. A close shot of headphones is followed by another of a radio; Hannes leans into the frame, puts on the headphones and turns a dial. As Hannes begins telegraphing the meteorological data, the camera cuts to

another man in headphones, surrounded by electronic equipment with a large map of Germany behind him. In this sequence, mountain technology is used to provide information to the scientists below, suggesting that the presence of technology in the Alps can be accommodated within the traditional space of the alpine hut.

Technology performs a vital connective function in *Storms over Mont Blanc*. World War I ace pilot Ernst Udet flies his airplane over Hannes's lonely weather station, delivering the mail and providing a bit of company to the hardened mountain man. Hannes and Hella (Leni Riefenstahl) are first brought together through the device of the telescope; as Hella gazes up at the night sky from her father's observatory, Hannes does the same. In this mountain film, technology represents the possibility of connection across vast spaces, linking the city and the mountain to their mutual benefit.

Storms over Mont Blanc offers an ideal version of how technology can be integrated into the mountains without destroying the experience of adventure. Even with weather reports, radios and telegraphs, the characters still face grave dangers and mortal threats. The mountains are not tamed by technology; indeed, the drama of mountain adventure is heightened by technology's ability to anticipate the coming cataclysm. One of Hannes's first messages to the city below asks whether the *Föhn* is coming, a warm alpine wind that brings blizzards and avalanches to the Alps. This scene serves a dual function; first, it heightens dramatic tension by foreshadowing the arrival of terrible weather, and second, it illustrates how technology can be put to use to save lives.

Where *Storms over Mont Blanc* presents a utopian resolution of the tension between pristine alpine nature and technology, *The Blue Light* (1932), according to the Germanist Nancy Nenno, offers "a panegyric to a landscape that is already lost."⁵¹⁸ *The Blue Light*, unlike *Storms over Mont Blanc*, presents the mountains as a landscape

⁵¹⁸ Nenno 72.

already ruined by tourists. The film's narrative structure implies as much. In its opening scene, two tourists arrive by automobile in a small village in the Dolomites, and their car is immediately surrounded by children selling shiny crystals and trinkets. The female tourist focuses her attention on a small locket with a picture of Junta (Riefenstahl), and a close-up of the portrait emphasizes its significance. Once inside their hotel room, the couple also sees Junta's likeness on the cuckoo clock on the wall. A young boy also brings in a heavy book that tells Junta's story, and as the couple begins to read the tale, the film's narrative shifts into the past, presenting a legend that warns against the destruction of the landscape at the hands of greedy profiteers.

Unlike *Storms over Mont Blanc*, *The Blue Light* is a film dedicated to the memory of a landscape that has disappeared into the past. The tourists that the audience sees at the beginning of the film are the harbingers of a new type of tourism, one that Nenno identifies as "cultural tourism, a practice that embraces and enshrines the past."⁵¹⁹ They do not stay at the luxury resorts that are depicted in *The Holy Mountain* and *Storms over Mont Blanc*; instead, they stay in the comparatively primitive village and immerse themselves in local legend. Where *Storms over Mont Blanc* looks forward into the harmonious technology of the future, *The Blue Light* looks backward into a lost paradise.

Yet what precisely was lost in the central narrative of *The Blue Light*? The source of the eponymous blue light, a cave filled with crystals and accessible only by climbing a vertiginous cliff, represents the romantic magic and mystery of the Alps, a beautiful natural phenomenon protected by the harsh landscape. When the moon is full, it illuminates the cave, which draws the young men of the village like moths to a flame. Junta, however, is the only person in the village capable of reaching the cave, while the young men fall to their deaths. When Vigo follows Junta one night, however, and

⁵¹⁹ Nenno 63.

discovers a path to the cave, he reports the cave's great wealth to the villagers. Blinded by greed, they proceed up to the cave and loot it. When Junta returns to the cave and sees that it has been destroyed, she leaps to her death.

The loss of the crystal cave and its mysterious blue light, as well as Junta's death, signifies the loss of the Alps as a mythopoetic space. A parable of the perils of unfettered greed, *The Blue Light* suggests the dangers of commercializing alpine space; once a value has been assigned to the landscape, it becomes susceptible to exploitation and ruination. The commodification and consumption of the alpine experience within the film's central narrative casts alpine space as nothing more than a memory. The memory of Junta, and the unspoiled natural beauty represented by the blue crystal cave, have become the village's tourist industry, as the trinkets sold by the children suggest. The tourists in *The Blue Light* are visiting not so much a landscape as the collective memory of one.

ALPINE CHARACTERS IN THE MOUNTAIN FILM

Whether alpine space is presented as a futurist fantasy or as a lost paradise, the characters that move within alpine space present a menagerie of alpine characters. The stoic masculine hero, the urban playboy on skis, the coy tomboy, the local guide with the incomprehensible dialect – all of these characters populate the mountain films, much as they did the literary and visual culture of mountaineering during the Weimar Republic. The mountain films draw upon a standard stock of alpine characters, yet these characters were imbued with qualities and animated by emotional states that mountaineers found problematic. Nonetheless, many of the character attributes found in the mountain film later became vital topologies for the documentary propaganda films of mountaineering expeditions in the Third Reich.

From a purely physical perspective, the leading men in many of Fanck's mountain dramas, including Luis Trenker and Sepp Rist, were the embodiments of the alpine ideal

of masculinity. Their lantern-jawed profiles, sunburned skin and powerful physicality incorporated much of what alpine organizations considered the mountain man to be. Physical appearance alone, however, did not make the mountaineer. Their actions and behavior within the film occasioned a great deal of criticism in mountaineering circles.

Masculinity in the mountain film often pits one type of man against another: the romantic adventurer, solitary and laconic, against the playful athlete, sociable and gregarious. In *The Holy Mountain*, the conflict is between the Friend and Vigo. Their differences are illustrated by two contrastive sequences within the film. After seeing Diotima perform in the theater at the luxury hotel, the Friend, overcome by emotion, races from the performance hall, brow furrowed, into the mountains, where the intertitles inform us he seeks to calm his inner turmoil. Vigo, on the other hand, waits around for Diotima and gives her an Edelweiss pin after flirting with her. The Friend's reserve and maturity contrast strongly with Vigo's youthful exuberance and naivete.

The second contrastive sequence places Vigo at a skiing competition and the Friend alone in the mountains. Vigo has invited Diotima to come watch him participate in both the ski jump and a cross-country race. Positioned as an athlete competing for fun and to impress Diotima, Vigo is once again presented as a city boy, a charming but ultimately unserious man. The Friend, on the other hand, hikes alone through difficult and treacherous terrain, looking for the most beautiful mountain in the world, where he plans to marry Diotima the next day. The differences between the two men are further emphasized by the intertitles. Vigo's skiing, while exciting, inhibits the proper appreciation of nature: "racing through the forest, they no longer notice the fairy tale beauty of the snow-covered firs." The Friend, on the other hand, approaches the mountain environment as a worshipful acolyte: "wild and fantastic, like a gothic cathedral, rises from its mighty foundation – "his most beautiful mountain."

Women are not merely the passive recipients of male attentions in the mountain film; female characters play central and active roles. In *The Holy Mountain*, *Storms over Mont Blanc*, and *The White Hell of Piz Palü*, Riefenstahl, who plays the female lead in all three films, is presented as a strong-willed, athletic woman. Indeed, Riefenstahl's character is responsible for the attempted rescues of the male leads in all three films. However, it is Riefenstahl's turn in her directorial debut, *The Blue Light*, that presents the most complicated representation of femininity.

As the film scholar Eric Rentschler has noted, Junta's role in *The Blue Light* parallels many of the generic conventions of the horror film in general and the vampire film in particular.⁵²⁰ Yet Junta's character is also the one most closely associated with the mountains; she is the only character in the film who can climb unassisted to the cave, and she is a responsible steward of the magnificent treasure she finds there. While she cannot speak to other human beings, she communes with the mountain, entering physically into it. And when the mountain dies, she hurls herself to the ground below in despair. The horror of Junta's death is incidental and secondary to the destruction of the mountain; one might say that *The Blue Light* is more murder mystery than horror film.

Death is a central and recurring theme in the mountain film. In *The Holy Mountain*, both Vigo and the Friend, caught by a storm high on a treacherous north face, succumb to the elements; in *Storms over Mont Blanc*, Hella's father slips and falls to his death; in *The White Hell of Piz Palü*, Dr. Krafft's wife plummets to her death; in *The Blue Light*, Junta's death coincides with the desecration of her crystal cave. Following the mountain film into the cinema of the Third Reich, death remains ubiquitous in the genre: a friend's death leads Tonio to leave the mountains for the skyscraper ranges of New

⁵²⁰ Rentschler, *The Ministry of Illusion* 31-45.

York in *The Prodigal Son* (1934); several climbers are broken upon the Matterhorn in *The Mountain Calls!* (1938).

The glorification of death in the mountain film is most pronounced in Fanck's *The Holy Mountain*. The drama of the film's final thirty minutes revolves around the question of whether Vigo and the Friend will survive a storm, pinned high upon a mountain. The tension is heightened when the Friend, believing that Vigo has stolen the beautiful dancer Diotima from him, advances upon Vigo in a jealous rage. Vigo slips and would fall to his death were it not for the climbing rope that connects the two men. The Friend faces a terrible choice: to hold on to Vigo in a quixotic attempt to save him, or to cut Vigo loose and save himself. The code of the mountaineer, however, demands that the Friend sacrifice himself to try and rescue his friend.

As the night goes on, the storm intensifies, and Vigo shouts up to the Friend, begging him to save his own life; the Friend, however, closes his eyes and continues to hold Vigo suspended over the abyss. Vigo succumbs to the storm, however, yet the Friend refuses to release Vigo's snow-cocooned corpse. The film turns radically toward the irrational when the Friend experiences a vision. In a sequence that reveals the Friend's hallucinatory fantasies, he and Diotima approach an altar framed symmetrically by urns of flame within a cathedral of ice. The Friend and Diotima hold hands as they traverse the enormous space of the frozen hall, and as they approach the altar, it explodes, and the cathedral collapses in a hail of stalactites. The film returns to the physical world, where the Friend grins madly at the breaking dawn. He totters slowly forward toward the rising sun, holding the rope that connects him to the long-dead Vigo, and plunges over the edge to his death.

The film's final moments are defined by a murder, a hallucination and a suicide. Yet the film's intertitles provide explicit instructions to the audience to guide their

comprehension of these events. The Friend, although he has – however accidentally – murdered his friend, receives the treatment of a hero: “he held onto his fallen friend the whole night, and thus sacrificed himself.” When a rescue party returns and gravely informs Diotima that both men have died, tragedy becomes heroic sacrifice when one mountaineer claims, “Among us, the greatest value ... is loyalty.” There is no mention of the suicide. Instead, the film’s final intertitles grant the Friend – not Vigo – immortality. Diotima stands at the ocean’s edge, with mountains and the Friend’s face superimposed behind her, and the triumphant note is sounded: “Above it all looms a holy mountain – a symbol of the greatest values that humanity can embrace – fidelity – truth – loyalty – Faith.” Up until these last thirty minutes, *The Holy Mountain* focused on a melodramatic love triangle; so why does it veer so precipitously into the darker territory of madness, murder and death? And why are these events in the film interpreted with such heroic bombast?

The director’s explanation for making *The Holy Mountain* is likewise unclear. Fanck’s own description of his inspiration for the film focuses on his friendship with a fellow mountaineer. In an article written for the *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung*, Fanck describes an episode in which he and his friend Hans Rohde were once surprised by a sudden storm. They settled in for a few hair-raising hours, waited out the storm, and managed to return safe and sound. The article claims that the film resulted from Fanck’s subsequent meditations on friendship, and that the film should be viewed as a paean to camaraderie.⁵²¹ Yet Fanck’s own interpretation of the film’s meaning completely ignores the fact that *The Holy Mountain* terminates a fast friendship with a murder and a suicide.

Regardless of the director’s stated intentions, *The Holy Mountain* glorifies death by (mis)attributing heroic values to tragedy. The film asks the audience to suspend their

⁵²¹ Arnold Fanck, “Wie ich zu dem Thema des ‘Heiligen Berges’ kam,” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 5 November 1926: 1-3.

critical faculties and embrace the heroic explanation of the Friend's death. The film masks the Friend's madness with virtuous platitudes, transforming him from a killer to a hero; under the guise of universal human values such as "fidelity, truth, loyalty ... faith," an occasion for mourning and horror is turned into a celebration of universal values.

DEBATES ON ALPINE CINEMA

The reception of the mountain films among mountaineers was rather ambivalent. Debates about alpine cinema within the mountaineering community suggest that mountaineers applied different critical standards to the images on one hand, and to the plots on the other. Mountaineers and film critics alike expressed unadorned awe at the landscape sequences of the mountain film; they were clearly appreciative of the cinema's ability to capture the grandeur of the Alps and project it upon the big screen. Mountaineers and film critics were also united, however, in their critiques of the melodramatic narratives found in the mountain film. In the debates about alpine cinema, however, mountaineers positioned themselves as authoritative critics about what was and was not "alpine" about the mountain film, claiming that, as practitioners of the sport, they were in a unique position to judge a film's merits.

Some of the Alpenverein's film critics explicitly juxtaposed their critique of the mountain film with that of the professional film critic. Film critics, they contended, were too concerned with the details of production, whether or not the film was artistically innovative, or whether the film impressed the audience. An Alpenverein film critic, paraphrasing the consensus of the film critics on *The Mountain of Fate* (1924), summed up the general tone of the reviews as follows:

One of the greatest German films; of the highest artistic value; sporting events, framed by landscape and deep ideas welded together into a complete whole,

exercising a deep effect upon the eye and soul of the spectator. The alpine sport film par excellence in surpassing perfection.⁵²²

Alpenverein commentators on alpine film accused professional critics of focusing on the formal accomplishments of the genre, such as the technical challenges of filming at high altitude, while ignoring the films' narratives. The critic quoted above went on to claim that no-one could properly comprehend a mountain film better than a real mountaineer:

“The big city film critic is often not a mountaineer and is completely unfamiliar with mountaineering; only a mountaineer can serve as a professional critic for the alpine sport film, since *only he* could have been the creator of such a film.”⁵²³ Another mountaineer-critic, writing a review of *The Holy Mountain*, likewise pointed to his own alpine achievements as the basis for his authority as a film reviewer:

If the film were called a feature film and were proud of its great background landscapes, then I would say that I had seen better, but I wouldn't feel myself obligated to waste any words on the matter. But because we are dealing here with a “mountain film,” a film that wants to speak directly to mountaineers, then I consider it my right and my duty to express my opinion. I have written every word here not as an amateur film critic, but as an alpinist, as a practicing mountaineer.⁵²⁴

⁵²² “Zum Film ‘Der Berg des Schicksals,’” *Der Bergsteiger* 17 October 1924: 343. “Einen der großen deutschen Filme; von höchster künstlerischer Vollendung; sportliches Geschehen, landschaftliche Umrahmung und Tiefe der Idee zusammengeschweißt zu vollendeter Einheit und von tiefer Wirkung auf Auge und Seele des Beschauers. Der alpine Sportfilm schlechthin in nicht mehr zu überbietender Vollendung.”

⁵²³ “Zum Film ‘Der Berg des Schicksals’” 343. “Der Großstadt-Filmkritiker ist oft kein Bergsteiger und steht dem Alpinismus meist ganz fremd gegenüber; der berufene Kritiker für den alpinen Sportfilm kann nur der Alpinist selbst sein, genau so wie *nur er* der Schöpfer eines solchen Filmes werden könnte.” Emphasis in original.

⁵²⁴ MDÖAV (1927): 19. “Würde sich der Film ‘Spielfilm’ nennen und auf seinen großartigen landschaftlichen Hintergrund stolz sein, dann würde ich konstatieren, daß ich schon Besseres sah, würde mich aber nicht weiter bemüßigt fühlen, ein Wort darüber zu verlieren. Da es sich aber ohne jeden Zweifel um einen sogenannten ‘Bergfilm’ handelt, einen Film der in erster Linie zu den Bergsteigern sprechen will, so halte ich es für mein Recht und meine Pflicht eine Ansicht zu äußern. Jedes der folgenden Worte schreibe ich nicht als laienhafter Filmkritiker, sondern als Bergsteiger, als ausübende Hochtourist.”

Mountaineers also differentiated between two different audiences for the mountain film: the film-going masses and the experienced alpinist. Each audience had different expectations, which resulted in different viewer reactions. According to the alpine film critics, the masses sought distraction and sensation, while mountaineers went to the cinema to learn more about the mountains they already knew so well:

For the lay audience, the new alpine film is an unheard-of sensation and teaches the spectator how to cringe as the “heroes” (they are all well-known mountaineers) perform their climbing set pieces on the “Guglia.” The mountaineer can still view the film with great pleasure, because the film really does conjure up unbeatable mountain images, climbing shots and documentary sequences onto the big screen.⁵²⁵

Yet the images of the natural world and the climbing sequences were ruined for the mountaineer, “... who cannot expect that a film meant for a wide audience should forgo tendencies towards sensational prurience; the mountaineer shakes his head more than once, sometimes quite vigorously in protest.”⁵²⁶ Mountaineers repeatedly expressed their disappointment that the films had been produced for a mass audience without taking into account the expert advice of mountaineers themselves. In many ways, the cinema was representing mountaineering to a lay public in ways that contradicted the Alpenverein’s self-image. This threat to the Alpenverein’s monopoly over the official culture of mountaineering occasioned a great deal of worry and not a little anger.

Mountaineers were often quite explicit about what they *did* want to see in a mountain film. In reviews of feature films, documentary films, so-called *Kulturfilme*

⁵²⁵ “Der Berg des Schicksals,” *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 90 (30 January 1925): 3. “Für das große Laienpublikum bedeutet der neue alpine Film eine unerhörte Sensation und lehrt die Zuseher das Gruseln, wenn die “Helden” (alle sind sie bekannte Alpinisten) ihre waghalsigen Kletterkunststücke an der “Guglia” ausführen. Auch der Bergsteiger sieht sich den Film mit viel Vergnügen an, weil er tatsächlich unübertreffliche Bergbilder, Kletteraufnahmen und Naturstudien auf die Leinwand zaubert.”

⁵²⁶ “Der Berg des Schicksals” 3. “Aber der Bergsteiger, der allerdings nicht verlangen darf, daß ein für das große Publikum bestimmter Film seinetwegen der Sensationslüsternheit nicht Konzession macht, schüttelt mehr als einmal ungläubig, ja sogar mißmutig den Kopf.”

(culture films) and *Naturfilme* (nature films), alpine film critics outlined their expectations for the genre. Mountaineers clearly preferred documentary style, with its adherence to real time and its mimetic fidelity to the actual practice of mountaineering, over special effects and editing techniques that obscured the simplicity of alpine climbing. A British documentary filmed by Britain's third expedition to Mount Everest was described by an Austrian reviewer as a "first-class technical and dramatic film production ... a document of the human drive to discovery and the triumph of alpinism."⁵²⁷ The raw drama of mountaineering, stripped of artifice and melodrama, was sufficient to entertain and educate audiences, according to mountaineers; as one reviewer put it in a scathing review of the Fanck film *The Mountain of Fate* (1924), the film should have dispensed with the plot and just focused on the essentials: "not who, not where, just "a mountaineer" and a "mountain," *nothing more*."⁵²⁸ As Barth had remarked earlier, the ideal mountain film would educate and entertain the public with faithful renditions of the mountaineer's real craft.

The mountain film genre, of course, was not beholden to the expectations of mountaineers, and the films departed in a number of ways from the Alpenverein's desired narrative.⁵²⁹ Mountaineers complained incessantly about how the mountain film

⁵²⁷ Hanns Barth, "Zum Gipfel der Welt," *Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 105 (15 May 1925): 3. "Aber uns Bergsteigern wird er noch mehr bieten als eine interessante, technisch wie dramatisch erstklassige Filmvorstellung, denn Kapitän Noels Werk ist ein Dokument menschlichen Forschertriebes und des Triumphes des Alpinismus..."

⁵²⁸ "Zum Film 'Der Berg des Schicksals'" 345. "...*nicht wer, nicht wo, nur "ein Bergsteiger" und ein "Berg," nichts weiter.*"

⁵²⁹ Dr. Arnold Fanck was certainly attuned to how the mountaineering community received his films, as is attested to by numerous articles that Fanck wrote to defend his work in the alpine press. In his article, "Ein offener Brief in Causa Alpiner Film," Fanck directly addressed negative reviews of his film *Die weisse Hölle von Piz Palü*. (*Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung* 347 (3 January 1930): 2-4). Rentschler has also commented on Fanck's obsession with his critics; he collected every review he could find and was quite sensitive about negative reviews; see Eric Rentschler, "Mountains and Modernity: Relocating the *Bergfilm*." *New German Critique* 51 (Special Issue on Weimar Mass Culture, Autumn 1990): 137-161, esp. 143.

misrepresented mountaineering, pointing out mistakes in technique and geographical nomenclature. Reviewers complained about “impossibilities in terms of technique,” including equipment that was either misused or entirely inappropriate for a scene.⁵³⁰ Equipment was insufficient, and in one scene, Trenker appeared “wearing the insignia of the Austrian Alpine Club.”⁵³¹ As one reviewer stated it, the producers of the mountain film needed to learn how to navigate a difficult path between two sets of expectations: “... the demands of the audience for sensationalism, and the desire of the [mountaineering] audience, for whom the film is really meant, for real sport, authenticity, and staying away from kitschy diversions.”⁵³²

There was also a great deal of concern that the films trivialized mountaineers in front of a lay audience that already “suspected mountaineers of irrationality and reckless behavior.”⁵³³ Critiques of the mountain films expressed anxieties that the image of the mountaineer was being misrepresented to the masses in the cinema. Reviews that attacked the representation of mountaineers suggests how the elite character of mountaineering culture had led to an increasingly vocal mistrust of the masses and their ability to discern between the fantasies on the screen and the realities of mountain-climbing. Alpine film, according to one reviewer, taught the lay public to associate “sensationalism” with the mountains, to experience the vicarious “terror, whenever the

⁵³⁰ “Zum Film ‘Der Berg des Schicksals’” 344. “... technische Unmöglichkeiten...”

⁵³¹ “Der Berg des Schicksals,” Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung 90 (30 January 1925): 3.

⁵³² “Zum Film ‘Der Berg des Schicksals’” 344. “... der Forderung der Zuschauer nach “Sensation” und dem Verlangen jener Kreise, an die sich der Film wendet, nach sportlicher Wahrheit und Echtheit und Reinhalten von Beugungen in Kitschige.”

⁵³³ Dagmar Günther, Alpine Quergänge: Kulturgeschichte des bürgerlichen Alpinismus (1870 -1930) (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1998) 140.

“heroes” perform their daring climbing set pieces.”⁵³⁴ While the masses might enjoy such thrills, “the mountaineer, who cannot reasonably demand that a film meant for a wide audience doesn’t make some concessions to the thirst for sensationalism, still shakes his head in disbelief, perhaps even with a scowl.”⁵³⁵ The mountain film was so far divorced from the realities of mountaineering, according to this reviewer, that “one could almost say that nothing else could be more suitable for providing the public with a completely incorrect image of alpinism, one which approaches the grotesque, than this otherwise beautiful landscape film. Beginners can look to this film to learn how things should not be done.”⁵³⁶

As we have seen, mountaineers reacted vigorously against the mountain films of Weimar cinema. Almost universal in their praise of the landscape imagery captured by the film camera, they were equally unanimous in their denunciation of the genre’s melodramatic plots and of the representations of mountaineers as foolhardy romantic madmen who risked their lives in the mountains for love. Yet mountaineers still believed in the power of cinema to represent the real challenges, beauty and elegance of mountaineering to audiences; as one commentator noted in the Alpenverein’s *Mitteilungen*, the mountain film displayed “great developmental possibilities.”⁵³⁷ Yet the

⁵³⁴ “Der Berg des Schicksals” 3. “Für das große Laienpublikum bedeutet der neue alpine Film eine unerhörte Sensation und lehrt die Zuseher das Gruseln, wenn die “Helden” (alle sind sie bekannte Alpinisten) ihre waghalsigen Kletterkunststücke an der “Guglia” ausführen.”

⁵³⁵ “Der Berg des Schicksals” 3. “... der Bergsteiger, der allerdings nicht verlangen darf, daß ein für das große Publikum bestimmter Film seinerwegen der Sensationslüsternheit nicht Konzession macht, schüttelt mehr als einmal ungläubig, ja sogar mißmutig den Kopf.”

⁵³⁶ “Der Berg des Schicksals” 3. “Man könnte fast sagen, daß nichts so sehr geeignet ist, der großen Oeffentlichkeit ein vollständig unrichtiges und ins leichtsinnig Groteske verzerrtes Bild der Alpinistik zu vermitteln wie dieser landschaftlich großartige Film. Der Anfänger aber kann aus ihm lernen, wie man es nicht machen soll.”

⁵³⁷ MDÖAV (1927): 30.

dream of the ideal alpine film would not be realized in the Weimar Republic; it was not until the Himalayan expeditions to Nanga Parbat during the 1930s that mountaineers would have a film that they would fight for, tooth and nail.

Chapter 8: *Gleichschaltung* and the Nazification of Mountaineering

During the Third Reich, the Alpenverein was granted a near-monopoly on how mountains and mountaineering were represented. With the official support of the government, the Alpenverein was able to wield unprecedented power over what was published about mountaineering and how mountaineering was depicted in the cinema. The Alpenverein's newfound influence over alpine representations, however, came at a steep price. Slowly and inexorably, the Alpenverein was absorbed into the Nazi state through the process known as *Gleichschaltung*.

When the National Socialists seized control of the German government in January 1933, one of their first priorities was the integration of all aspects of public and associational life into centralized organizations. This process, which affected all aspects of everyday life, was called *Gleichschaltung*, or coordination, meaning shifting into the same gear, line or current.⁵³⁸ This innocuous term was used to describe the dissolution, disempowerment and total absorption of public and organizational life into the Nazi party structure.

The term *Gleichschaltung* was first used to describe two laws in the Spring of 1933 that abolished elected state governments and replaced them with governors hand-picked by Hitler. By January 1934, the state governments were auxiliary branches of the Interior Ministry of the Reich, fully under the control of the central government.⁵³⁹ In

⁵³⁸ Martin Broszat and Horst Möller provide the following definition: "Der Begriff '*Gleichschaltung*' – eine bemerkenswerte Entlehnung aus der elektrischen Stromschalttechnik – entstammt eigentlich der politisch-administrativen Sphäre der nationalsozialistischen Machtergreifung. Es ist aber üblich geworden, ihn auf die Gesamtheit all derjenigen Maßnahmen auszudehnen, mit denen das NS-Regime bisher autonome öffentliche und gesellschaftliche Institutionen zu uniformieren und in seine Herrschaft einzubinden suchte..." Martin Broszat and Horst Möller, eds., Das Dritte Reich. Herrschaftsstruktur und Geschichte (Munich: Beck, 1986) 41-43.

⁵³⁹ Martin Broszat, The Hitler State. The Foundation and Development of the Internal Structure of the Third Reich, trans. John W. Hiden (New York: Longman, 1981) 96-132.

January 1935, all of Germany's mayors were placed under the control of Nazi party officials. In two short years, political life at the local level was inextricably intertwined with the central government in Berlin.

As *Gleichschaltung* aligned municipal and local governments with Nazi policy and ideology, a host of new laws radically changed Germany's political and cultural orientation. In April 1933, the "Law for the Restoration of the Professional Civil Service" dismissed all leftists, liberals and Jews (with the exception of those who had served in World War I) from the civil service. This affected schools and universities profoundly, as schoolteachers and university professors sympathetic to the Nazi cause filled the posts vacated by prominent intellectuals.

Labor unions also disappeared into the Nazi party machine. In May 1933, the Nazis arrested several labor leaders under the pretext that they needed "protective custody." Such euphemisms masked the very real physical violence that was going on; in many instances, trade union buildings were occupied by the Hitler's paramilitary force, the SA (*Sturmabteilung*), and completely trashed. Shortly after this first round of arrests, the Nazis announced the formation of the German Labor Front (*Deutsche Arbeitsfront*, or DAF), which effectively neutralized the labor unions and integrated their members into the Nazi party. Instead of representing workers' interests, the DAF's purpose was to keep labor productive and under control, ensure ideological conformity and present the appearance of a classless society; indeed, even industrialists and other employers were invited to apply for membership in the DAF.⁵⁴⁰ Blue-collar workers were not the only victims of *Gleichschaltung*; the highly educated professional classes, including attorneys,

⁵⁴⁰ Roderick Stackelberg, *Hitler's Germany. Origins, Interpretations, Legacies* (New York: Routledge, 1999) 108.

judges, psychologists and medical doctors, were also forced into the institutional machinery of the Nazi state.

The Nazis also took over radio and print in the first year of the Third Reich. Broadcasting officials, editors and writers were all replaced with Nazi party members. As cheap radios (*Volksempfänger*) came on the market, the Nazis were able to dominate the airwaves, turning the radio into “a central instrument of ideological and political indoctrination.”⁵⁴¹ In October 1933, a law affecting newspaper editors ensured ideological conformity, wresting control from the newspapers and establishing Nazi hegemony over the written word. In addition to broadcast radio and the press, the formation of the Reich Chamber of Culture (*Reichskulturkammer*) consolidated Nazi control over almost every aspect of cultural life, including film, music, theater, literature and the fine arts.⁵⁴² At the end of 1933, the Nazis exercised total hegemony over what Germans heard, read and saw in the mass media.

The *Gleichschaltung* of German institutions and culture proceeded rapidly and with little to no resistance. Remarkably, *Gleichschaltung* at the local level encountered little resistance. The Nazi ideal of the national community (*Volksgemeinschaft*), which envisioned a classless, racially purified, united German society, was a powerful and attractive concept to many Germans; indeed, “its appeal helps to account for the extraordinary willingness of substantial segments of the public to submit to *Gleichschaltung* and to participate in the dissolution of non-Nazi institutions and

⁵⁴¹ Norbert Frei, *National Socialist Rule in Germany. The Führer State 1933-1945*, trans. Simon B. Steyne (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1993) 63.

⁵⁴² Frei 64.

reorganizations.”⁵⁴³ The incredible speed and thoroughness of German society’s re-orientation affected all levels of society and culture:

By this time [30 June 1934], almost all organizations, institutions, professional and representative bodies, clubs and societies had long since rushed to align themselves with the new regime. ‘Tainted’ remnants of pluralism and democracy were rapidly removed, nazified structures and mentalities adopted. This process of ‘coordination’ (*Gleichschaltung*) was for the most part undertaken voluntarily and with alacrity.⁵⁴⁴

Indeed, the swiftness of the consolidation of Nazi power surprised even the Nazis and their coalition partners:

Hitler’s former coalition partners had every reason to rub their eyes: at a tempo thought possible by only a few – and least of all by them – a tempo that itself constituted part of the success, the Nazi process of regimentation and coordination had succeeded. It had not only changed the political system from top to bottom, but also left hardly a single area of the economy, culture and social life untouched. Essential characteristics of Nazi rule were now developed. Democracy and the constitutional state were set aside, parliamentarism, parties and trade unions defeated, the *Länder* [states] and most social organizations had been subjected to *Gleichschaltung*, discrimination against Jews established, the spirit of leftism and left-liberalism quashed, public opinion and culture censored. But the one-party state was not based on force and repression alone – it was supported by the agreement of broad strata in society. Both totalitarian and populist traits united the regime, and from this characteristic mixture it drew its ability to stabilize itself.⁵⁴⁵

By the summer of 1934, Germany had undergone an incredible transformation. Yet during this initial period of *Gleichschaltung*, the Alpenverein, unique among the sports associations of the Third Reich, followed its own path toward conformity and submission, negotiating with the Nazi authorities until 1939. The Alpenverein’s history during *Gleichschaltung* goes against the grain of accepted wisdom about the coordination

⁵⁴³ Stackelberg 105. See also: William Sheridan Allen, *The Nazi Seizure of Power. The Experience of a Single German Town, 1930-1935* (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1965). Allen argues that Germans embraced the ideal of the *Volksgemeinschaft* because the social reality of the “national community” did not threaten their class position (236).

⁵⁴⁴ Ian Kershaw, *Hitler. 1889-1936: Hubris* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1998) 435.

⁵⁴⁵ Frei 69.

of German society during the early years of the Third Reich and raises important questions about what was possible within the Nazi state.

THE ALPENVEREIN'S INTEGRATION INTO THE THIRD REICH

After 1933, all sports organizations within Germany were coordinated into the German National Federation for Physical Exercise (*Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen*, hereafter DRfL). In order to qualify as a registered sports organization, sports clubs had to guarantee that their membership was fully “Aryan,” and they had to submit to the so-called “Führer principle.” The Aryan clause was meant specifically to remove Jews from the membership rolls of sports associations, while the Führer principle stripped clubs of their autonomy, demanding that the leadership of all sports organizations be appointed from above by the Nazi authorities, rather than elected by their own members. Once a sports club met these minimum requirements, it was allowed to register with the DRfL as an official organization.

The reality of *Gleichschaltung* differed greatly among the various sports clubs. The German Gymnastics Association (*Deutsche Turnerschaft*), a sports organization that had long been dedicated to *völkisch* thought and considered itself to be an ideological trailblazer for the Nazi movement, was “coordinated” shortly after 1933, and much to its dismay.⁵⁴⁶ Although the gymnasts expected their efforts to be rewarded with a leading position within the Third Reich’s sports culture, they were among the first to be integrated into the newly formed DRfL. Hans von Tschammer und Osten, soon to become the leader of all sports organizations in the Third Reich, had spoken in private to various gymnastics officials about his desire to present Hitler with “his” gymnastics club, and in July 1933, Von Tschammer und Osten was announced as *Führer* of the German

⁵⁴⁶ See Martin L. Müller, “Turnen und Sport im sozialen Wandel. Körperkultur in Frankfurt am Main während des Kaiserreichs und der Weimarer Republik” *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 33 (1993) 107-136.

Gymnastics Association. Two years later, the gymnasts completely lost their independence and were subsumed into the DRfL.⁵⁴⁷

The sharpshooting clubs, or *Schützenvereine*, also had a long history of representing themselves as associations dedicated to military preparedness during the Weimar Republic. The *Gleichschaltung* of the *Schützenverein* in Göttingen, as the historian David Imhoof has shown, involved less heavy-handed intervention from above than careful negotiation. Local Nazi leaders in Göttingen acted as intermediaries between the national authorities and the local Göttingen chapter of the *Schützenverein*; as Imhoof notes, “sharpshooting’s coordination into the Third Reich was, in the end, a process of integration and even mutual co-optation.”⁵⁴⁸ However collaborative *Gleichschaltung* may have been for the sharpshooters, it still resulted in their eventual absorption into the Nazi state apparatus.

For Germany’s mountaineering organizations, *Gleichschaltung* proceeded in a different manner altogether. The German-Austrian Alpenverein enjoyed the special protection of Reich Minister of the Interior Wilhelm Frick, to whom Reich Sports Leader (*Reichssportführer*) von Tschammer und Osten reported. Frick was himself a member of a Munich section of the Alpenverein, and, in agreement with Von Tschammer und Osten, he offered the Alpenverein a special arrangement: “only the Aryan clause and the Führer principle need to be introduced for the time being.”⁵⁴⁹ Ostensibly, the Alpenverein was to be allowed its independence, at least for the moment.

⁵⁴⁷ Dieter Steinhöfer, Hans von Tschammer und Osten. Reichssportführer im Dritten Reich (Berlin: Bartels & Wernitz, 1973) 31-33.

⁵⁴⁸ David Imhoof, “Sharpshooting in Göttingen: A Case Study of Cultural Integration in Weimar and Nazi Germany,” German History 23.4 (2005): 491.

⁵⁴⁹ Helmuth Zebhauser, Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 94.

In their desire to show their loyalty to the Nazi regime, the Munich sections of the Alpenverein called an emergency meeting in 1933 to discuss whether to accept Frick's offer. The local sections acted swiftly and decisively, agreeing immediately to exclude Jews from membership, and renaming all of their chairmen as Führer. Although the Berlin sections waited until their regularly scheduled annual meeting in March 1934 to discuss Frick's offer, they came to the same conclusion. These measures seemed to offer the Alpenverein a degree of autonomy enjoyed by no other sports organization.

Some Alpenverein members were more enthusiastic than others about *Gleichschaltung*. In October 1933, Munich section member Georg Leuchs published a notice in the *Tiroler Anzeiger*, calling upon mountaineers to form a mountain troop (*Gebirgssturm*) to be part of the SA. Listing the requirements for signing up, Leuchs addressed those who might have been ambivalent towards the Nazis before 1933, but now felt compelled to demonstrate their loyalty:

Some may have regretted their decision to not join the *national front* in a timely fashion, choosing instead to stand aside. This is an opportunity to revisit that decision and to take a step in the right direction, in a direction that one could be forced to follow soon: this is a chance to enjoy the advantages of volunteering and participating in a unit that corresponds with the mountaineer's wishes and opinions, one that maintains *the character of a select, elite troop*.⁵⁵⁰

Leuchs's local initiative was not appreciated by the central Alpenverein authorities in Innsbruck. The article in the *Tiroler Anzeiger* had been "a nasty surprise" at the

⁵⁵⁰ "Bericht über die Organisation von Gebirgstruppen für Hitler durch den Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenverein im *Tiroler Anzeiger* vom 23.10.1933," *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, ed. Helmuth Zebhauser (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 260. "Mancher hat es vielleicht schon bereut, sich nicht rechtzeitig in die *nationale Front* eingereiht zu haben und abseits zu stehen. Hier ist ihm noch einmal Gelegenheit geboten, das Versäumte nachzuholen und einen Schritt zu tun, zu dem er möglicherweise *bald gezwungen werden könnte*: nur daß er jetzt den Vorteil der Freiwilligkeit genießt und den Vorteil, einer Formation zugeteilt zu werden, die seinen Wünschen und Meinungen entspricht und *die den Charakter einer auserlesenen Truppe* erhalten soll."

administrative headquarters.⁵⁵¹ In no uncertain terms, Raimund von Klebelsberg, then head of the Alpenverein, reminded Leuchs of the club's explicitly apolitical stance; his announcement of the formation of a mountaineering troop was "a political activity that contradicts our charter and could have unpleasant consequences for the Alpenverein."⁵⁵² Von Klebelsberg was particularly worried about negative effects on German-Austrian relations, citing concerns that politicized German sections would be viewed by the Austrian authorities not as sport clubs, but as political movements. Leuchs's political grandstanding could also endanger the ownership of German sections' huts in Austrian territory. Finally, von Klebelsberg sternly requested that Leuchs help to quell the public relations disaster he had started, before it got out of hand. As we shall see, Leuchs hardly tempered his tone; in fact, he continued promoting the militarization of the Alpenverein right up to the beginning of hostilities in World War II.

As much as the Alpenverein tried to retain its independence and autonomy by keeping a safe distance from political battles, the Nazi drive towards *Gleichschaltung* was inexorable and inescapable. The historian Helmuth Zebhauser, in an examination of the Allgäu-Kempton section's governing statutes, traces the progressive encroachment of *Gleichschaltung* at the local level. Allgäu-Kempton's 1877 statute read,

By joining the German-Austrian Alpenverein, the section's purpose is to expand upon and circulate knowledge about the German and Austrian Alps, to facilitate travel in the same, and to awaken and nourish love for the natural world of the mountains.⁵⁵³

⁵⁵¹ "Brief von R. von Klebelsberg an Dr. Georg Leuchs vom 24.10.1933," *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, ed. Helmuth Zebhauser (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 260. "...eine politische Betätigung, die mit der Satzung im Widerspruch stünde und die für den Verein unangenehme Folgen haben könnte."

⁵⁵² Zebhauser 260-262.

⁵⁵³ "Begleitschreiben zum Statut 1936 Niederschrift der Generalversammlung des D. u. Oe. AV 1935," *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, ed. Helmuth Zebhauser (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 176. "Zweck der Sektion ist, im Anschluß an den Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenverein, die Kenntnis der Alpen Deutschlands und Österreichs zu verbreiten und zu erweitern, die Bereisung derselben zu erleichtern, die Liebe zur Gebirgsnatur zu wecken und zu pflegen."

In early 1933, after negotiations with Frick and Von Tschammer und Osten, the section revised their statute as follows, more narrowly defining the political role that could be played by Allgäu-Kempton:

The section's purpose is to expand upon and circulate knowledge about the German and Austrian Alps, facilitate travel in the same, preserve their beauty and native character, thereby cultivating and strengthening a love for the German *Heimat*. The club is apolitical; the expression and pursuit of political affairs lies beyond its jurisdiction.⁵⁵⁴

Apparently, an apolitical stance and an expression of love for the German *Heimat* was not enough for the Nazi authorities. In 1934, the statute was amended again, adding the phrase, "The section most certainly stands by National Socialist Germany."⁵⁵⁵ Finally, in 1936, the last iteration of the statute marked the section's absolute submission to the demands of *Gleichschaltung*:

The club focuses on the physical and spiritual education of its members in the spirit of the National Socialist people's state, through the regular practice of physical exercise; in particular, its purpose is to broaden our knowledge of the high mountains...⁵⁵⁶

⁵⁵⁴ "Begleitschreiben zum Statut 1936 Niederschrift der Generalversammlung des D. u. Oe. AV 1935," *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, ed. Helmuth Zebhauser (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 176. "Er hat den Zweck, die Kenntnis der Alpen im allgemeinen zu verbreiten und zu erweitern und die Bereisung der Alpen Deutschlands und Österreichs zu erleichtern, ihre Schönheit und Ursprünglichkeit zu erhalten und dadurch die Liebe zur deutschen *Heimat* zu pflegen und zu stärken. Der Verein ist unpolitisch; die Erörterung und Verfolgung politischer Angelegenheiten liegt außerhalb seiner Zuständigkeit."

⁵⁵⁵ "Begleitschreiben zum Statut 1936 Niederschrift der Generalversammlung des D. u. Oe. AV 1935," *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, ed. Helmuth Zebhauser (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 176. "Doch steht die Sektion auf dem Boden des nationalsozialistischen Deutschlands."

⁵⁵⁶ "Begleitschreiben zum Statut 1936 Niederschrift der Generalversammlung des D. u. Oe. AV 1935," *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, ed. Helmuth Zebhauser (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 176. "Der Verein bezweckt die leibliche und seelische Erziehung seiner Mitglieder im Geiste des nationalsozialistischen Volksstaates durch planmäßige Pflege der Leibesübungen, insbesondere ist es sein Zweck: die Kenntnis der Hochgebirge zu erweitern...."

Even at the local level in Allgäu-Kempton, conformity was absolute; the new 1936 statute corresponded word for word with the statutes of the mountaineering department of the DRfL.

The Nazi government exerted increasing pressure to further integrate the club with the state. At first, the Alpenverein implemented decrees from Von Tschammer und Osten affecting linguistic and social conventions. In February 1934, the Alpenverein pushed through the “Führer principle,” renaming all of their chairmen (*Vorsitzende*) as Führer.⁵⁵⁷ Two years later, Von Tschammer und Osten required very specific communicative formalities:

In the former organizations, different forms of address and greeting were customary. The unity of German physical education in the German National Federation requires the implementation of uniform terminology. I hereby decree that all letters will be concluded with “Heil Hitler.” At all events, whether they are sports events or social gatherings, if a collective greeting is called for, the “Sieg-Heil” salute shall be used. Everyone is to be addressed with the appellation “Comrade.”⁵⁵⁸

The linguistic changes accompanying *Gleichschaltung* also included the ubiquitous martial rhetoric of the Third Reich. In Von Tschammer und Osten’s first written address to mountaineers, he described mountaineering in the language of battle and struggle:

I know very well how to assess and appreciate the value of the German mountaineer within the context of German sports, and I am convinced that mountaineers represent an organization that I, as Führer of German physical

⁵⁵⁷ “Vorsitzender oder Führer – Brief des Vorsitzenden der Sektion Berlin, Dr. Rudolf Hauptner, an den Verwaltungsausschuß des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins, vom 16.2.1934,” Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat, ed. Helmuth Zebhauser (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 263.

⁵⁵⁸ Mitteilungen des Deutschen Bergsteigerverbandes im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen 3.2 (November 1936). “In den früheren Verbänden sind verschiedene Anrede- und Grußformen gebräuchlich gewesen. Die im Deutschen Reichsbund hergestellte Einheit der deutschen Leibesübungen macht die Anwendung einheitlicher Bezeichnungen notwendig. Ich ordne daher an, daß im Briefverkehr ausschließlich die Unterschrift “Heil Hitler” verwandt wird. Bei sportlichen oder geselligen Veranstaltungen ist, wenn ein gemeinsamer Ruf ausgebracht wird, der Ruf “Sieg-Heil” anzuwenden. Als Anrede ist das Wort “Kamerad” zu gebrauchen.”

education, can depend upon; I don't have to teach mountaineers what struggle means, because mountaineering inherently means struggle.⁵⁵⁹

These changes in linguistic conventions and in the rhetoric of mountaineering indicate how meticulous the process of *Gleichschaltung* could be. However pernicious these changes may have been, though, the organizational restructuring and distribution of power throughout all of Germany's mountaineering clubs was astonishing in its breadth and scope. And in August 1933, one man was assigned responsibility for the *Gleichschaltung* of mountaineering within the Nazi Reich: Paul Bauer.

Paul Bauer had a long history in the international mountaineering community. The organizer of several Himalayan research expeditions in the late 1920s and early 1930s, Bauer was a talented and internationally respected mountaineer and expedition leader. In the Spring of 1933, the Alpenverein's leadership was meeting with von Tschammer und Osten to negotiate a degree of autonomy. Shortly thereafter, Eugen Allwein, a prominent alpinist, met with Von Tschammer und Osten at a gymnastics festival in Stuttgart. Allwein was of the opinion that the Alpenverein's leaders, especially brewery owner Carl Dinkelacker, were too focused on the business side of the club. Instead, Allwein recommended "a skilled mountaineer with an international reputation, who had no ties to economic interests and would only serve the mountaineering ideal – namely, Herr Paul Bauer."⁵⁶⁰ Bauer was invited to Berlin, where he was asked to organize and lead what would become the *Deutscher Bergsteiger- und Wanderverband* (German Mountaineering and Hiking Association) within the DRfL.

⁵⁵⁹ *Mitteilungen der Gruppe Bergsteigen im Deutschen Bergsteiger- und Wanderverband* (1934): 1. "Ich weiß sehr wohl den Wert der deutschen Bergsteiger in der Gesamtheit der deutschen Menschen des deutschen Sportes zu schätzen und zu würdigen, und ich bin überzeugt, daß gerade sie im ganzen eine Mannschaft darstellen, auf die ich mich als Führer der deutschen Leibesübungen verlassen kann, denn die Bergsteiger brauch ich nicht das Kämpfen zu lehren, weil Bergsteigen selbst Kämpfen bedeutet."

⁵⁶⁰ "Beglaubigte Abschrift der eidesstattlichen Erklärung von Dr. Eugen Allwein vom 14.3.1948," *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, ed. Helmuth Zebhauser (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 263.

The German Mountaineering and Hiking Association began applying pressure to the Alpenverein shortly after Bauer's appointment. In a letter of February 1934, Bauer required that all Alpenverein section functionaries join the Nazi party over the course of the year.⁵⁶¹ In April 1934, Bauer announced the formation of the *Reichsverband der Deutschen Bergsteiger* (National Association of German Mountaineers), a state organization that uneasily coexisted with the German-Austrian Alpenverein. Bauer described the new political landscape of mountaineering, and the Alpenverein's position, in the following manner:

... The grand old organizations and clubs were tested and weighed, and some were found to be too insubstantial. The old purpose of the German-Austrian Alpenverein, however, was reaffirmed. The Alpenverein should be the bond that brings together all German mountaineers. Above all, it should remain a bridge that leads to the hearts of our Austrian mountaineers and friends.⁵⁶²

Bauer had relegated the Alpenverein to the margins as a non-political group necessary for the maintenance of positive relations between German and Austrian mountaineering organizations. While the National Association of German Mountaineers performed the political task, the Alpenverein was to continue as an ambassador to Austria.

Within Germany's borders, however, massive changes were underway. All alpine organizations, with the exception of the Alpenverein, were dissolved. Interior Minister Frick announced that "class-based sports" (*Klassensport*) were no longer compatible with National Socialism, thereby dissolving the socialist mountaineering club, the Touristenverein "Die Naturfreunde." Frick's decree also allowed for the seizure of

⁵⁶¹ "Sektionsfunktionäre sollen NSDAP-Mitglieder sein, 1934," *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat*, ed. Helmuth Zebhauser (Munich: Bergverlag Rother, 1998) 266.

⁵⁶² *Mitteilungen der Gruppe Bergsteigen des Deutschen Bergsteiger- und Wanderverbandes* (1934): 2. "Die alten großen Organisationen und Verbände wurden geprüft, gewogen und mancher wurde zu leicht befunden. Der Deutsche und Oesterreichische Alpenverein wurde aber in seiner alten Aufgabe neu bestätigt. Er soll das Band sein, das sich um alle deutschen Bergsteiger schließt. Er soll vor allem die Brücke bleiben, die hinüber führt zum Herzen unserer österreichischen Bergsteigerfreunde."

Naturfreunde assets, including their properties in the Alps. An edict of 14 October 1933 assigned the responsibility for disposing of Naturfreunde mountain huts to Paul Bauer as a Reich trustee; his only guideline was to utilize these assets for the benefit of his sports organization.⁵⁶³

The rapid accumulation of power within Bauer's organization alarmed the Alpenverein, which was grappling with its own internal debates. In 1934, due to political tensions between Germany and Austria, the annual Alpenverein conference was held in Vaduz, Liechtenstein.⁵⁶⁴ At the conference, leading officials of the Alpenverein raised the question of whether individual club sections could or should withdraw from Germany's government-run sports organizations. Bauer's response to this conference suggests that tensions between the Alpenverein and the Nazi authorities were rapidly heating up:

The German mountaineering clubs, including the German Alpenverein branches, have, since 1933 and without exception, belonged to the German Mountaineering and Hiking Association, and therefore to the jurisdiction of the *Reichssportführer* and the German National Association of Physical Education [DRfL]. Yet the leadership of the German-Austrian Alpenverein has attempted to dissociate the Alpenverein sections from the German sports authorities, although this very same leadership urged this integration in the first place in meetings with the national sports leadership, as was revealed at the conference in Vaduz. These attempts to secede from the DRfL had to fail, and they did fail; the Alpenverein sections themselves never approved or supported this action, and their affiliation with the German Mountaineering and Hiking Association was never in doubt.⁵⁶⁵

⁵⁶³ Zebhauser 137. The former Naturfreunde properties were later transferred to the German-Austrian Alpenverein.

⁵⁶⁴ Zebhauser 149.

⁵⁶⁵ Mitteilungen des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im DRfL 8-9 (May-June 1936): 97. "Die deutschen Bergsteigervereine, darunter auch die deutschen Alpenvereinszweige gehören seit 1933 ohne Ausnahme dem Deutschen Bergsteiger- und Wanderverband an und sind über ihn dem Reichssportführerring und nach dessen Umbildung in den Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen diesem angeschlossen. Von der Leitung des D. und Ö. Alpenvereins wurde zwar mit allen Mitteln versucht, eine Loslösung der Alpenvereinszweige aus der deutschen Sportorganisationen zu erreichen, obwohl 1933 die Alpenvereinsleitung zunächst selbst bei der Reichssportführung diese Eingliederung angeregt hatte, was in der denkwürdigen I. Vaduzer Tagung sichtbar nach außen in Erscheinung trat. Diese Absonderungsversuche mußten aber scheitern, und sind gescheitert; sie wurden von den deutschen

This was not the only evidence of frictions between Bauer's department in the DRfL and the Alpenverein. Since its founding, the Alpenverein's mission had been to facilitate travel and enjoyment in the Alps, providing an organizational home to serious mountaineers and alpine enthusiasts alike. Bauer, however, repeatedly articulated the mission of the German Mountaineering and Hiking Association in a way that was guaranteed to offend the Alpenverein's sensibilities:

The goal of my department's work is the promotion of mountaineering. This means focusing on people, not dead things – not the Alps, not the development and research of this or that mountain range, not other clubs and associations.⁵⁶⁶

Bauer also darkly suggested what could happen to unspecified "clubs," which almost certainly meant the Alpenverein, if they did not align themselves with Bauer's department and, by association, the Nazi regime:

But there are also clubs that haven't done anything on these topics, and it is urgently necessary that they begin working on this task if they don't want to slowly and inexorably go under.⁵⁶⁷

Bauer's threats suggest that he encountered skepticism, fear and resistance from the Alpenverein. Apparently, the club did not intend to let go of their founding principles without a fight.

When Bauer announced the formation of the *Deutscher Bergsteigerverband* (German Mountaineering Association) in 1936, his description of the new organization's mission indicates that the Alpenverein's protests had had some effect. Bauer's new

Alpenvereinszweigen selbst nicht gebilligt oder unterstützt, so daß deren Zugehörigkeit zum DBWV. nie zweifelhaft war."

⁵⁶⁶ Mitteilungen des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im DRfL 9 (June 1935): 1. "Das Ziel aller Arbeit des Fachamtes ist die Förderung des Bergsteigens. Im Mittelpunkt stehen daher die Menschen und nicht tote Dinge, nicht die Alpen, nicht die Erschließung und Erforschung dieser oder anderer Gebirge, auch nicht die Vereine oder Verbände."

⁵⁶⁷ Mitteilungen des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im DRfL 9 (June 1935): 1. "Es gibt aber auch Vereine, die nichts auf diesem Gebiete unternommen haben und für sie ist es dringend erforderlich, an diese Aufgabe heranzugehen, wenn sie nicht langsam und unaufhaltsam zugrunde gehen sollen."

organization contradicted almost all of the Alpenverein's founding principles, but granted the Alpenverein some degree of autonomy, at least for the time being:

The German Mountaineering Association wants to foster and promote mountaineering, gather Germany's mountaineers into the DRfL, supervise and advise them, and lead them in the spirit of the National Socialist state. The purpose of the German Mountaineering Association is not the development of the Alps or the promotion of tourism possibilities in the mountains. That task is left to the organizations that have already been active in those fields.⁵⁶⁸

Yet a highly important step towards *Gleichschaltung* was also enunciated in the German Mountaineering Association's founding charter; Bauer proclaimed that the new organization "is the only association for mountaineering in the German Reich, and is alone competent and responsible for mountaineering."⁵⁶⁹ Bauer was positioning his association to initially exclude, and eventually absorb, the Alpenverein.

Gleichschaltung did not require the wholesale dissolution and integration of the entire Alpenverein, at least not all at once. While Bauer spent his efforts in trying to bring the entire Alpenverein into line with National Socialism, others were targeting specific components of the Alpenverein's organization. Youth organizations were of paramount importance to the Nazis, and the Alpenverein's robust youth programs presented a tempting prize.

The Alpenverein's youth programs began in 1913, on the eve of World War I, in one of the Alpenverein's Munich sections. The initial goals of the youth program were essentially the same as the Alpenverein's, namely, "to familiarize young people with their

⁵⁶⁸ Mitteilungen des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im DRfL 8-9 (May-June 1936): 1. "Der Deutsche Bergsteigerverband will das Bergsteigen pflegen und fördern, die deutschen Bergsteiger im DRfL sammeln, betreuen, und im Geiste des nationalsozialistischen deutschen Staates leiten. Die Aufgabe des Deutschen Bergsteigerverbandes ist nicht die Erschließung der Alpen oder die Förderung der Verkehrsmöglichkeiten in den Gebirgen. Diese Aufgabe bleibt vielmehr den bisher auf diesen Gebieten tätigen Vereinen überlassen."

⁵⁶⁹ Mitteilungen des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im DRfL 8-9 (May-June 1936): 2.

Heimat and strengthen their love for their country.”⁵⁷⁰ In 1918, the Alpenverein recommended that all sections start youth groups within their organizations; a year later, the club called for the introduction of new insignia and a new membership card for youth, along with discounts at the Alpenverein’s huts.⁵⁷¹ In 1927, the Alpenverein charter was amended to include among its goals “the creation and support of youth hiking.”⁵⁷² By 1929, there were about 89 youth groups with approximately 4,500 members and twelve youth teams dedicated to competitive climbing.⁵⁷³

The Munich mountaineer and professor Ernst Enzensperger built the Alpenverein’s youth organizations from the ground up. In 1929, the Alpenverein extended its special thanks to Enzensperger for dedicating “his entire free time and his energy for several years” to youth alpinism.⁵⁷⁴ In 1933, after over a decade of leadership in the Alpenverein, Enzensperger stepped down, citing “differences of opinion.”⁵⁷⁵ Unlike the youth organizations of other clubs, which had disappeared into the ranks of the Hitler Youth and the League of German Girls (*Bund Deutscher Mädel*) shortly after Hitler’s seizure of power in January 1933, the Alpenverein’s youth organizations remained independent and intact. Nonetheless, Enzensperger detected the political change in the air, and his intuition told him what was coming:

The world of ideas and the leadership of the Hitler Youth pushed into the elite reserves of the youth group programs of the German Alpenverein ... The end goal

⁵⁷⁰ MDÖAV (1913): 245.

⁵⁷¹ ZDÖAV (1929): 345.

⁵⁷² ZDÖAV (1929): 306.

⁵⁷³ Zebhauser 164.

⁵⁷⁴ ZDÖAV (1929): 346.

⁵⁷⁵ Zebhauser 164.

of the entire program was to become a preparatory military academy for the education of new blood for the mountain armed forces. The reverence for the mountains lost ground to an arrogant view that viewed the peaks as nothing more than a better and more dangerous playground. Mountaineering became subjugated to a totally alien, end-oriented philosophy.⁵⁷⁶

Shortly after Enzensperger's departure, Baldur von Schirach, the Reich Youth Leader (*Reichsjugendführer*), and Reich Sports Leader von Tschammer und Osten signed the first agreement between their respective organizations, the Hitler Youth and the DRfL. All athletes between ten and fourteen years of age would complete their physical education under the auspices of the Hitler Youth or the League of German Girls; from fourteen to eighteen, these same young athletes would train and compete within the organizations of the DRfL.⁵⁷⁷ Although this agreement went into effect in 1934, the Alpenverein's youth organizations were exempted, at least for a short while. In 1938, young hikers in the Alpenverein's programs were forced to begin wearing the insignia of the Hitler Youth, and in the following year, all of the Alpenverein's youth programs were transferred into Hitler Youth groups.⁵⁷⁸

Other sports organizations, such as the German Gymnastics Association, had already been fully "coordinated" by 1935. The case of the Alpenverein suggests that *Gleichschaltung* did not proceed in an orderly manner; decrees were not imposed seamlessly from the top of the Nazi state to the local level. Instead, there was a great deal of negotiation between individual organizations and the institutions set up to integrate

⁵⁷⁶ Enzensperger quoted in Zebhauser 164-165. "Gedankenwelt und Führung der HJ drangen aber auch in das auserlesene Reservat der Jugendgruppenarbeit des Deutschen Alpenvereins vor... Das Endziel der gesamten Jugendarbeit war die vormilitärische Schulung zur Ausbildung eines geeigneten Nachwuchses für die Gebirgstruppen. Die Ehrfurcht vor den Bergen ... wich einer Überheblichkeit, die in ihnen nichts anderes als ein besseres und gefährlicheres Klettergerüst sah. Bergsteigen wurde einem ihm wesensfremden Zweckgedanken untergeordnet."

⁵⁷⁷ Mitteilungen des Deutschen Bergsteigerverbandes im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen, 3.1 (October 1936): 1.

⁵⁷⁸ Zebhauser 167.

public life with the Nazi regime.⁵⁷⁹ Nonetheless, despite the Alpenverein's privileged position within the sports culture of the Third Reich, *Gleichschaltung* eventually claimed the Alpenverein as well. In May 1938, after the annexation of Austria and the immediate *Gleichschaltung* of all Austrian sports organizations, the German-Austrian Alpenverein was renamed the German Alpenverein (*Deutscher Alpenverein*). Arthur Seyß-Inquart was named *Führer* of the Alpenverein, and Paul Bauer was named his deputy. On 21 December 1938, Hitler announced that the DRfL would be renamed the National Socialist Association for Physical Education (*Nationalsozialistischer Reichsbund für Leibesübungen*). In early 1939, the Alpenverein lost the last vestiges of its remarkably long-lived independence and joined the ranks of the other sports clubs in the Nazi state.

Now that all resistance had been removed and the Alpenverein integrated into the Nazi government, Georg Leuchs, the member of the Munich section who in 1933 had suggested the formation of a mountain troop, spoke triumphantly of mountaineering's role in the new war:

The German Alpenverein has also oriented itself to the role it will play in this formidable struggle in which we find ourselves today. What the Alpenverein has cultivated through years of strenuous work on the training and toughening of our German youth and the German people, will begin to bear fruit. Innumerable young men, hardened in their battle against the mountains, are wearing their beloved Edelweiss on their uniform as they line up rank upon rank to join the mountain troops of our armed forces. They are prepared to master the most difficult, the hardest tasks that our leadership can give them.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁹ Arnd Krüger points out that "... Nazism was a frame within which people could move if they knew the rules and did not object publicly to the basic ideas." Arnd Krüger, "Strength through Joy. The culture of consent under fascism, Nazism and Francoism," *The International Politics of Sport in the 20th Century*, eds. Jim Riordan and Arnd Krüger (New York: Taylor & Francis Group, 1999) 71.

⁵⁸⁰ Helmuth Zebhauser and Maike Trentin-Meyer, eds., *Zwischen Idylle und Tummelplatz* (Munich: Bergverlag Rudolf Rother, 1996) 376. "Auch der Deutsche Alpenverein hat in diesem ungeheuren Kampf, in dem wir stehen, die ihm zukommende Stellung bezogen. Das, was der Alpenverein in jahrelanger, mühevoller Arbeit an der Ertüchtigung der deutschen Jugend und des deutschen Volkes geleistet hat, beginnt auch in diesem Falle Früchte zu tragen. Ungezählte im Kampf mit den Bergen hart gewordene junge Männer tragen jetzt ihr geliebtes Edelweiß am Soldatenrock und reihen sich Glied für Glied ein in die

Before the war with Poland began, Arthur Seyß-Inquart, the Führer of the Alpenverein, had articulated the new purpose of mountaineering: “... we mountaineers love struggle for the sake of struggle ... there can never be another 1914, never another 1918, for the German people.”⁵⁸¹ The Alpenverein was formally committed to victory at any cost; *Gleichschaltung* was complete.

During the tumultuous 1930s, however, as the Alpenverein was slowly absorbed into the Nazi state, developments of international significance to the mountaineering community were underway. A series of Himalayan expeditions were sent to Nanga Parbat, a mountain that came to be known as the German “mountain of destiny.” The new powers granted to the Alpenverein within the Nazi state helped to position the Alpenverein as the main purveyor of alpine representations, whether in text or film. In the next two chapters, we will see how the Alpenverein began to use its new institutional powers to assert its hegemony over the master narrative for mountains and mountaineering.

Gebirgstruppen unserer stolzen Wehrmacht. Sie sind bereit, die schwierigsten und härtesten Aufgaben, die die Führung an sie stellt, zu meistern.”

⁵⁸¹ Zebhauser and Trentin-Meyer 379. “...wir Bergsteiger lieben den Kampf um des Kampfes willen ... Für unser deutsches Volk darf es nie mehr ein Jahr 1914 und nie mehr in Jahr 1918 geben.”

Chapter 9: Nanga Parbat, Germany's Mountain of Fate

During the 1930s, Germany's mountaineers increasingly focused their attention on the distant Himalayan peak of Nanga Parbat. The site of five expeditions from 1932 to 1939, Nanga Parbat became synonymous with German mountaineering. The textual and visual documents that register the German obsession with Nanga Parbat reveal the depth of the ideological and institutional investments in mountaineering under National Socialist rule. Nanga Parbat provided a grand stage where the superiority of the Alpenverein's master narrative could be demonstrated. In the 1930s, Himalayan mountaineering became an international contest, and mountaineering had become a national mission for well-organized and well-funded expeditions. Despite repeated attempts to conquer Nanga Parbat, which came to be known internationally as Germany's "mountain of fate," the swastika was never planted on Nanga Parbat's summit.

Germany's fixation on Nanga Parbat led to the construction of an "invented tradition" for the mountain that reached back almost one hundred years.⁵⁸² Germany had a long history with Nanga Parbat, although that history remained obscure until it was described in literature accompanying descriptions of the expeditions of the 1930s. The story began in the 1850s with the Schlagintweit brothers, who traveled to the Himalaya under the auspices of the British East India Company.⁵⁸³ In 1854, the three brothers Schlagintweit (Hermann, Robert and Adolph) arrived in Bombay to begin their Himalayan research.⁵⁸⁴ Although their primary focus was the mapping of the Himalaya

⁵⁸² Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds. The Invention of Tradition (New York: Cambridge UP, 1992).

⁵⁸³ Wilhelm Kick, Schlagintweits Vermessungsarbeiten am Nanga Parbat 1856 (Munich: Verlag der Bayerischen Akademie der Wissenschaften, 1967).

⁵⁸⁴ Kick 13.

region, the Schlagintweits displayed astonishing energy and an unswerving commitment to science; in addition to geodetic and geophysical work (such as astronomical observation and geomagnetic measurement), they also collected data on the geology, meteorology, glaciology, botany, zoology, anthropology, history and linguistics of the area. This was no mean feat, since their discoveries encompassed an area north-south from Ceylon to Turkestan and east-west from Sikkim to Nanga Parbat.⁵⁸⁵ And all of this was done in two years and seven months.

The rigors of mid-nineteenth-century Himalayan travel were quite different from those of the twentieth century. The Schlagintweits traveled alone for months without contact with other Europeans; they were alone in a foreign country whose languages and culture they did not know; they were without capable research assistants, and were responsible for all of their own research; and they traveled without a base camp, doctor, supply lines, or any of the safeguards and support structures associated with Himalayan expeditions today.⁵⁸⁶ On 14 September 1856, Adolf Schlagintweit had been the first European to see the south wall of Nanga Parbat, a fact that was used in the 1930s to posit an historical German connection to the remote mountain.⁵⁸⁷ By emphasizing the difficulties of Himalayan mountaineering and trumpeting Schlagintweit's discovery of

⁵⁸⁵ Kick 14.

⁵⁸⁶ The work performed by the three brothers was collected in four volumes and published, in English, from 1861 to 1866. These four volumes, however, hardly contain the sum of their research; the Bayerische Staatsbibliothek still holds well over a hundred volumes of their notes that remain unpublished.

⁵⁸⁷ Kick 40. Although several sources report that Adolph Schlagintweit was the first European to pass under the shadow of Nanga Parbat, that was not the case. A great trade route had long passed through the Astor valley from Srinigar to Gilgit, which is precisely how the American-born Scotsman Alexander Gardiner caught sight of Nanga Parbat in 1830. He was followed by several British explorers, yet none of them reported Nanga Parbat by name. Kick notes at 43 that Gardiner did not leave any detailed descriptions of his journeys which might have identified him as the 'discoverer' of Nanga Parbat.

Nanga Parbat, subsequent accounts positioned Nanga Parbat as a mountain particularly worthy of sustained German interest and effort.

The invention of the Nanga Parbat tradition in the 1930s mapped the master narrative of mountaineering onto a single site. The mountaineers who attempted to climb Nanga Parbat were represented in text and film as subjects of a nationalized mountaineering narrative that positioned expedition members as an extension of the nation. Their individual qualities of courage, camaraderie, skill and stamina, amplified through their strength in numbers, became symbolic for the nation at large. And Nanga Parbat's geographic location within British India also added an element of imperial conquest and international competition, a chance to validate Germany's national virtues on the world stage.

The construction of this nationalist mountaineering narrative was nowhere as evident as in the tragedy surrounding the 1934 Deutsche Nanga Parbat Expedition. This one expedition resulted in a bestselling work of alpine literature, *Deutsche am Nanga Parbat* (*Germans on Nanga Parbat*, 1934), which enjoyed critical and popular success not only in Germany, but also abroad in English and French translations. The expedition also produced a documentary film, *Nanga Parbat: Ein Kampfbericht der deutschen Himalaja-Expedition 1934* (*Nanga Parbat: A Frontline Report on the German Himalaya Expedition of 1934*, 1935), which was used as propaganda in the Third Reich for over two years. This film was at the center of a fierce battle over the hegemony of the master narrative produced by the Alpenverein and supported by the National Socialist state. This chapter analyzes the book, and chapter ten addresses the film; together, these two chapters reveal how the Alpenverein's master narrative became the only narrative for mountains and mountaineering under Nazi rule.

THE 1934 GERMAN NANGA PARBAT EXPEDITION

Trapped high on Nanga Parbat in nightmarish weather, Willo Welzenbach, accompanied by Willy Merkl, leader of the 1934 German expedition to the Himalaya, scribbled a note to members of his expedition who were encamped below his position. After a failed summit attempt on the ninth-highest mountain in the world, Merkl had lost fellow climber Uli Wieland during their descent.⁵⁸⁸ In barely legible script, most likely written with frostbitten hands in near-total darkness, Welzenbach described their desperate situation: Merkl suffered from “utter exhaustion and frostbitten hands and feet,” while Welzenbach described his own symptoms of “bronchitis, angina, and influenza.” The climbers had attempted to descend earlier, but were too weak to move; they had not eaten anything warm for six days, with almost nothing to drink. The letter ended with the plea: “please help us soon here in Camp 7.”⁵⁸⁹ Merkl and Welzenbach died shortly after writing these words.

The deaths of the climbers of the 1934 Deutsche Nanga Parbat Expedition caused a national sensation back home in Germany. In the spring of 1934, the expedition had departed from Munich and headed to Nanga Parbat. Led by the railway engineer and mountaineer Willy Merkl, the expedition’s goal was to be the first team to reach the summit of a Himalayan peak. Riding a wave of popular interest sparked by Alpenverein advertisements and publications, along with numerous newspaper and radio accounts, the Nanga Parbat adventure was by far the most publicized mountaineering event in Germany history.

⁵⁸⁸ Nanga Parbat stands at 8,125 meters (26,658 feet). Rising over 7,000 meters in 27 kilometers, the mountain is one of the ten greatest elevation gains in so short a distance on Earth.

⁵⁸⁹ Fritz Bechtold, Deutsche am Nanga Parbat (Munich: F. Bruckmann, 1944) 5. “Ich, Willo, habe vermutlich Bronchitis, Angina und Influenza. Bara Sahib hat allgem. Schwächegefühl, und Erfrierungen an Füßen und Händen... Bitte helft uns bald hier in L. 7.”

The expedition was financed privately through a variety of sources, chief among them Merkl's fellow colleagues at the German Railways (*Deutsche Reichsbahn*), the Railway Clubs (*Eisenbahnvereine*), and the various sports clubs organized under the auspices of the German Railways.⁵⁹⁰ The Society for German Scientists (*Notgemeinschaft Deutscher Wissenschaften*) and the German-Austrian Alpenverein also provided funding for scientific work to be carried out in the Himalaya. While financial support came from private industry, Reich Sport Leader Hans von Tschammer und Osten provided government support by assisting the expedition with the application for and approval of the necessary travel visas through British India.⁵⁹¹

Through the financial support of these organizations and with the logistical support of Von Tschammer und Osten, the 1934 Nanga Parbat Expedition set forth to conquer a mountain for Germany. In a letter thanking the Breslau branch of the Reich Railway Club (*Reichsbahnverein*) for their financial contribution, Willy Merkl asserted that

Something like this is only possible in Germany. We will fight for Germany and dedicate all of our resources to conquer the first eight-thousand-meter peak for Germany. With warmest greetings from all of our comrades on the Nanga Parbat front. Heil Hitler!⁵⁹²

The press also described the expedition and its goals in explicitly national terms; unlike the 1932 German-American Nanga Parbat Expedition, a team in which Willy Merkl also

⁵⁹⁰ "Wir alle wollen helfen!" *Reichsbahn-Turn- und Sport-Zeitung* 7.10 (October 1933).

⁵⁹¹ "Die Nanga-Parbat-Expedition startbereit," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 13 March 1934.

⁵⁹² "Der letzte Brief Willi Merkl's," *Augsburger Postzeitung* 29 July 1934. "So etwas ist nur in Deutschland möglich. Für Deutschland werden wir kämpfen und werden alles daran setzen, den ersten Achttausender für Deutschland zu erobern. Mit dem herzlichsten Grüßen auch von allen Kameraden der Nanga-Parbat-Front. Heil Hitler!"

participated, the 1934 German expedition “consists *only of Germans*.”⁵⁹³ The all-German expedition enjoyed considerable attention and support from the public; one account of their departure describes the atmosphere as follows: “with cries of “Heil!” and waving handkerchiefs, the courageous German mountaineers left Munich central station on the train.”⁵⁹⁴ The expedition team members also acknowledged the national character of their mission, as “one last time, the expedition members saluted the flag that they hope to plant on the peak of the first conquered eight-thousand-meter peak on earth, Nanga Parbat, a flag decorated with the swastika and the imperial eagle.”⁵⁹⁵

The national conquest of the expedition was also to be captured on film. The giant German firm Siemens was proud to announce that the expedition was equipped with ten *Schmalfilm* cameras to memorialize their adventures. These cameras had the advantage of being smaller than normal film cameras and of using smaller film stock, thereby reducing the weight load for the mountaineers. Siemens was also careful to point out that the resulting film footage would not be of inferior quality, since the *Schmalfilm* stock would be transferred to standard 35-millimeter stock with very little loss in resolution.⁵⁹⁶ As both national endeavor and commercial campaign, the Nanga Parbat expedition promised not only the visual spectacle of Germany’s new flag planted upon the first conquered

⁵⁹³ “Deutsche Expedition zum Himalaya. Ausreise bereits Anfang Februar. Unter Führung von Ingenieur Merkl,” *Der Angriff* [Berlin] 15 January 1934. Original emphasis. “...besteht so, im Gegensatz zu Merkl’s erster Himalayagruppe, *nur aus Deutschen*.”

⁵⁹⁴ “Die deutsche Himalaja-Expedition gestartet,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* [Reichsausgabe, Berlin] 27 March 1934. “...unter Heilrufen und Tücherschwenken fuhr der Zug mit den kühnen deutschen Bergsteigern aus der Halle des Münchner Hauptbahnhofs.”

⁵⁹⁵ “Die deutsche Himalaja-Expedition gestartet,” *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* [Reichsausgabe, Berlin] 27 March 1934. “... ein letztes Mal grüßen die Teilnehmer noch mit der Flagge, die sie auf dem Gipfel des ersten bezwungenen Achttausenders der Erde, des Nanga Parbat, hoffen hissen zu können, die mit dem Hakenkreuz und mit dem Reichsadler geschmückt ist.”

⁵⁹⁶ “Schmalfilm auf der deutschen Himalaya-Expedition,” *Die Kinotechnik* [Berlin] 5 May 1934.

8000-meter peak, but also a useful advertisement for German technology deployed in the service of a national mission.

The German nation was overwhelmed by grief just a few months later as newswire reports revealed that Willy Merkl, along with two fellow Germans and six native porters, had died in a snowstorm on the heights of Nanga Parbat. Merkl and his fellow climbers, ambushed by a ferocious storm, had huddled together in a snow cave and slowly succumbed to the freezing cold. The tragic end of the Nanga Parbat expedition was reported throughout the world, and mountaineers from all over Europe expressed their admiration and condolences for the dead mountaineers. One English climber described the fallen climbers to the German press as “almost superhuman in their unselfishness, in their courageous spirit and their physical powers.”⁵⁹⁷ In Germany, some newspapers read in between the lines of the official reports to achieve the maximum dramatic impact: “the official expedition report sounds cold and pragmatic. But how much *tragedy*, how much *courageous sacrifice* and how much *loyalty* is hidden in this simple description. These men were *comrades*, men that had been brought together in their collective struggle against the mountains.”⁵⁹⁸

The German reaction was not confined to the press media. A twenty-minute radio program, followed by five minutes of radio silence, was broadcast throughout Germany on 25 July 1934.⁵⁹⁹ The radio program, entitled “Himalaja,” told the story of various

⁵⁹⁷ “Das Unglück der Himalaja-Expedition. Englische Bergsteiger würdigen Taten und Wesen der drei verunglückten Deutschen,” Aschaffener Zeitung 9 August 1934. “... fast übermenschlich in ihrer Uneigennützigkeit, in ihrem Geist des Eifers, und in ihren Körperkräften.”

⁵⁹⁸ “Inder-Treue in Eis und Schnee. Das Hohelied der Kameradschaft – Schicksale am Nanga Parbat,” Der Angriff [Berlin] 25 August 1934. “Kalt und nüchtern klingt der amtliche Bericht der Expedition. Wieviel *Tragik*, wieviel *Opfermut* und wieviel *Treue* aber steckt in dieser einfachen Schilderung. *Kameraden* waren diese Männer, die sich zum gemeinsamen Kampf um die Berge zusammengeschlossen hatten.” Original emphasis.

⁵⁹⁹ “Willi Merkl's Tod bestätigt,” Der Volksfreund [Aachen] 26 July 1934.

expeditions to Nanga Parbat, from the British mountaineer Albert Mummery, who died on the mountain in 1895, to the tragic demise of Willy Merkl and his fellow climbers in 1934. The radio broadcast positioned Germany as the nation whose climbers had taken on the challenge to climb Nanga Parbat.

One reviewer was dissatisfied with this historical survey, however, and pointed out that he would have appreciated more detail about the 1934 German expedition. After acknowledging that the program properly commemorated the death of Merkl and his fellow mountaineers, and commending the professional production quality of the program, the reviewer then proceeds to suggest how this program could have been more authentic and gripping:

Because what captivates the listener in such broadcasts is not the overall mood, but rather the details. The listener wants to know all the particulars of how such an expedition is prepared, he wants to camp with the expedition, march with them, experience every phase of the struggle. The most important elements are adventure, tension and danger; yet all of this was watered down and neutralized in the broadcast. The sense of immediacy is lost, and above all, the experience of the mountains, of natural violence, the ice as an antagonist in its own right – all of this should have somehow been included, if the struggle and the ascent are meant to be believable on the radio.⁶⁰⁰

Contrasting strongly with the uniformly nationalist rhetoric of the national press, this critique of a radio program meant to honor Germany's "fallen heroes" diverges significantly from commemorative discourse and veers into a discussion of how to make this radio event more dramatic and engrossing. The absence of nature as "an antagonist in its own right" – an absence which the reviewer is not quite sure how to rectify within the

⁶⁰⁰ "Himalaja," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* 25 July 1934. "Denn den Hörer fesselt an solchen Sendungen nicht das Allgemeine, sondern gerade das einzelne. Er will wissen, wie solch eine Expedition in allen Einzelheiten vorbereitet wird, er will mitlagern und mit marschieren und jede Phase des Kampfes erleben. Abenteuer, Spannung und Gefahr sind dabei die Hauptsache. All das wurde in diesem Funkgemälde abgeschwächt und 'neutralisiert.' Es fehlte der Reiz des Unmittelbaren und vor allen Dingen das Erlebnis des Gebirges, der Naturgewalt, die mit ihrem Gegensatz von Eis und Tropen als eigentlicher Hauptdarsteller irgendwie hervortreten müßte, wenn Kampf und Aufstieg im Sender glaubhaft werden sollten."

confines of a purely auditory medium – suggests that another mode of representation, namely the visual world of the film, might better capture the imagination of the public.

The documentary film of the 1934 expedition did not premiere until 18 February 1936, at the end of the Winter Olympics in Munich. The film, entitled *Nanga Parbat. Ein Kampfbericht der deutschen Himalaja-Expedition 1934* (*Nanga Parbat – A Frontline Report of the German Himalaya Expedition of 1934*), was comprised of footage shot by expedition members Fritz Bechtold and Peter Müllritter on their *Schmalfilm* cameras. The *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* described the documentary's entertainment qualities as an adventure film ("Nanga Parbat: An Epic Tale of Heroic Struggle in the Eternal Ice"), as well as its political and national value as a visual testament to heroism: "this grand film tells of the tragic fate of German heroes, of their unbowed iron will, of their camaraderie and loyalty even unto death."⁶⁰¹ Press coverage also indicated a positive reception.⁶⁰²

The success of the documentary film *Nanga Parbat* was preceded by the blockbuster success of Fritz Bechtold's *Germans on Nanga Parbat*, the most popular work of German alpine literature in the first half of the twentieth century, which went through twelve editions through 1944. Before this *Kulturfilm* appeared in cinemas all over Germany in 1936, Bechtold's book remained the authoritative text on the 1934 Nanga Parbat disaster. Along with the representations of mountaineering transmitted by radio and film, Bechtold's text functioned simultaneously as popular entertainment and as

⁶⁰¹ "Nanga Parbat. Ein Epos heldischen Kampfes im ewigen Eis." *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* [Berlin] Nr. 2453. "Dieses grandiose Filmwerk berichtet vom tragischen Schicksal deutscher Helden, von deren unbeugsamen stählernen Willen, von ihrer Kameradschaft und Treue bis in den Tod."

⁶⁰² Press quotes in the *Illustrierter Film-Kurier* included the following: *Völkischer Beobachter*: ... seit den Tagen der Summfilmzeit wurde ein derartig erschütternder, aber auch gleichzeitig heroischer Filmbericht nicht mehr geschaffen; *Münchener Neueste Nachrichten*: ... ein hinreißend erschütterndes Filmdokument voll ungeheurer Spannung und Dramatik; *Berliner Zeitung am Mittag*: Der Film hinterließ einen tiefen, ja erschütternden Eindruck; *Der Angriff*: ... das Herz der Zuschauer stockt beim Betrachten der Bilder; *Berliner Tageblatt*: ... ein stummes aber um so beredteres Zeugnis menschlicher Größe, zähesten Willens, treuester Kameradschaft und schließlich des Opfertodes.

propaganda. *Germans on Nanga Parbat* establishes several key themes that determined the discourse surrounding the tragedy. In Bechtold's narrative, expedition members are represented as masculine heroes, as superiors to their porters and Sherpas, and as exemplary models for a German nation predicated on sacrifice for the greater good.

Germans on Nanga Parbat remains a seminal document in the history of mountaineering during the Nazi period. Bechtold, survivor of not just one but four harrowing Nanga Parbat expeditions during the 1930s, originally published his book in 1934 shortly after returning from the Himalaya. Bechtold crafted a narrative replete with the symbolically charged rhetoric common in Nazi Germany, invoking and modifying themes, character types and metaphors that positioned the expedition as an explicitly national affair. Although he integrated familiar tropes and narrative strategies into his text, Bechtold inflected the Alpenverein's master narrative with a few fascinating twists.

FRITZ BECHTOLD'S *DEUTSCHE AM NANGA PARBAT*

Bechtold's expedition report augments and modifies the Alpenverein's master narrative. In the analysis that follows, I focus on four key components of Bechtold's version of the master narrative: the marshaling of chaos into order, the application of the Führer myth to Willy Merkl, racist attitudes toward native inhabitants of the Himalaya, and military rhetoric that praises sacrifice of the individual in service of the nation. All four of these themes conflate mountaineering with nationalism in a way that reveals the penetration and acceptance of Nazi ideology and aesthetics in the realm of mountaineering authorship. Bechtold's *Germans on Nanga Parbat* illuminates how cultural attitudes can shape the perception of an event and produce a text heavily influenced by political and aesthetic ideology.

The first component of Bechtold's version of the master narrative is the distillation of chaos into order. Mountaineering is inherently an activity balanced between

chaos and order; although a successful expedition requires organization, planning and consistent performance, it also depends critically upon favorable weather conditions, good relations with the porters and other support staff, the health of the climbers, and a heavy dose of luck. When mountaineers prepare for an expedition, there is typically an awareness that, no matter how well-planned and well-timed, an expedition can fall apart when faced with unfavorable conditions. On the 1934 German expedition to Nanga Parbat, however, this modest approach to the heights was abandoned when Merkl promised the Nazi nation a successful climb of Nanga Parbat. Merkl relied heavily on the notion that, given thorough planning and strict adherence to the plan, he was assured of success. This recklessly optimistic confidence may have stemmed from the heady atmosphere following Hitler's assumption of power the previous year, which was presented to the nation as the triumph not only of Nazi ideology, but also of party organization and adherence to its political platform. In countless speeches by Goebbels and Hitler, the Weimar Republic was presented as a disorganized chaos that threatened to collapse upon itself; only the organization of the nation along Nazi lines could save Germany.⁶⁰³ Similarly, Merkl quite possibly believed that his organizational skills and adherence to his plan of attack could overcome the multiple factors of uncertainty standing between his expedition and a successful climb of Nanga Parbat.

The second component of Bechtold's modified master narrative, the application of the Führer myth to Willy Merkl, stems directly from the Führer myth constructed around Adolf Hitler. In 1922, Kurt Hesse described Germany's national longing for a Führer in *Feldherr Psychologos* as follows:

⁶⁰³ For more on the Nazi interpretation of the decline of the Weimar Republic, see: Detlev Peukert, Die Weimarer Republik: Krisenjahre der klassischen Moderne (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp, 1987); Detlev Peukert, Inside Nazi Germany: Conformity, Opposition and Racism in Everyday Life (New Haven: Yale UP, 1987); and: Peter Gay, Weimar Culture: the Outsider as Insider (New York: Harper & Row, 1968).

Where he comes from, no one can say... But everyone knows; he is the Führer, everyone cheers him and thus he will one day announce himself, he for whom all of us are waiting, full of longing, who feel Germany's present distress deep in our hearts, so that thousands and hundreds of thousands of German picture him, millions of voices call for him, one single German soul seeks him.⁶⁰⁴

This irrational desire for a quasi-mystical leader eventually helped to propel Hitler to power, stressing a spiritual connection to the Volk that was reified by Hitler's self-appointed position as Reichsführer. Inherent in the Führer title were the connotations of infallibility, divine legitimacy, and the demand for unquestioning loyalty.⁶⁰⁵ It is precisely these qualities that Bechtold consistently mentions in his presentation of Merkl. The ubiquity of the Führer imagery throughout Bechtold's book emphasizes Merkl's leadership qualities, presenting him as invincible and infallible. Merkl always makes the critical decisions, deals with porter strikes, handles expedition finances, and directs the efforts of the other climbers. Merkl is never portrayed as anything but decisive, wise, stern and firmly in control. Even in death, Merkl struggles heroically, lasting out against a storm with superhuman endurance and courage.

The third component of Bechtold's master narrative, racism towards non-Europeans, surfaces in Bechtold's description of the porters and Sherpas hired to assist the expedition. Racism toward porters and Sherpas was not an exclusively German trait in the 1930s; the cultural anthropologist Sherry Ortner, in her work, *Life and Death on Mount Everest: Sherpas and Himalayan Mountaineering*, points out how generations of European climbers in the Himalaya have viewed Sherpas as an inferior race. Ortner traces how English expeditions to Mount Everest selected their Sherpas according to "facial and bodily types," "emphasizing their natural physicality" as opposed to their mental

⁶⁰⁴ Kurt Hesse, *Feldherr Psychologos* (Berlin: E.S. Mittler, 1922) 24.

⁶⁰⁵ For more information on the Führer myth, see: Ian Kershaw, *Der Hitler-Mythos: Volksmeinung und Propaganda im Dritten Reich* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1980).

faculties.⁶⁰⁶ Another typical observation was that the Sherpas were “childish,” “childlike,” and “undisciplined.”⁶⁰⁷ The Sherpas were viewed as unruly, happy children who needed the firm guidance of white Europeans.

This racism, however, has been tempered since the early Everest expeditions. Ever since hiring their first Sherpas, English expeditions described the Sherpas as helpful, cheerful, and astonishingly well-acclimated to the physiological demands of high altitude. Bechtold treats the Sherpas in much the same way, describing them as exceptionally strong porters with child-like personalities. There is a slight difference in Bechtold’s account, however, owing to his inability to view the Sherpas as a unique culture. Bechtold draws on several different racial stereotypes in his attempt to describe the Sherpas, creating a poly-racial typology that does not exist anywhere else in the literature on Sherpas. Like his English counterparts, though, Bechtold instrumentalizes the porters, making them tools of the expedition and expressing the idea that the Germans are the natural superiors and the Sherpas the natural inferiors, a race particularly well adapted to support – but never to lead – the expedition to Nanga Parbat.

The fourth and final component of Bechtold’s master narrative is the conflation of military language with the notion of sacrifice. The intrusion of military language into mountaineering texts most likely stems from the experiences many of the Nanga Parbat climbers endured in the first World War, which was a formative period not only for the climbers personally but also for Nazi ideologists. Ernst Jünger’s *In Stahlgewittern, ein Kriegstagebuch* (*Storm of Steel, A War Journal*, 1920) is just one example of the many books that attempted to make sense of the horrific carnage in the trenches. Jünger’s admixture of nature and military language in the title, along with his praise of the

⁶⁰⁶ Sherry Ortner, *Life and Death on Mount Everest: Sherpas and Himalayan Mountaineering* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999) 42.

⁶⁰⁷ Ortner 43.

camaraderie that developed among soldiers united by their common suffering, offered his readers a way to understand the first World War as an instructional, hardening experience for that generation. Jünger's militarization of nature also indicated the extent to which military metaphors permeated aesthetic perception, ascribing war-like qualities to natural phenomena. As we shall see, Bechtold also uses military language to describe conditions on the mountain, and praises the solidarity that develops among the climbers.

One of the fundamental ideas accompanying this military rhetoric is that of sacrifice. Sacrifice was a powerfully emotive word for the Nazis that transfigured death into heroism and suffused loss with national pride. Indeed, as Reich Sport Leader Hans von Tschammer und Osten declared in a memorial service for the dead mountaineers in Berlin in 1937, "the will to sacrifice [one's life] for the idea of the Himalaya" was an essential characteristic of the German mountaineer.⁶⁰⁸ In the same speech, Von Tschammer und Osten quoted the World War I poet Walter Flex, rendering the idea of sacrifice in military terms:

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.⁶⁰⁹

⁶⁰⁸ Rainer Amstädter, Der Alpinismus: Kultur, Organisation, Politik (Vienna: WUV-Universitätsverlag, 1996) 412.

⁶⁰⁹ Quoted in Amstädter 412. "Was Frost und Leid – / Mir gilt ein Eid, / Der glüht wie Feuerbrände / Durch Schwert und Herz und Hände. / Es ende drum wie's ende – / Deutschland, ich bin bereit!"

Bechtold also employs the idea of sacrifice in his narration of the many deaths on Nanga Parbat, which imports a national significance and meaning to individual tragedies. When Bechtold presents the deaths of his companions as national sacrifices, he simultaneously fends off criticism of the expedition and integrates his companions into the pantheon of Nazi heroes who have fallen for the cause of national glory.

The theme of struggle has always surfaced in literature about mountaineering, which seems appropriate given the harsh physical rigors and mental discipline requisite to its practice. In Nazi Germany, however, struggle acquired a new rhetorical valence. Hitler's *Mein Kampf* delineated this new conception of struggle as a conflict between the Aryan race and the lesser races, calling for the acknowledgment of this supposed biological difference and demanding that action be taken to catapult the Aryan into his rightful position as master. In the Nazi state, struggle was conceived of as the fulfillment of one's fate, the acceptance of one's obligation to rule and the necessary character to claim one's place as ruler.

Struggle, then, was not merely a physical activity but also one of metaphysical significance. The blurring of boundaries between physical and metaphysical struggle clearly emerges in a statement by Reich Sport Leader Hans Von Tschammer und Osten, who wrote in 1934 that "I know very well that the value of mountaineering, among all of the German sports, is to be highly treasured and honored, because I do not need to teach mountaineers what struggle is; mountaineering inherently means struggle."⁶¹⁰ This was not the first time that mountaineering had been cast as a struggle against diverse foes; in 1914, the German-Austrian Alpenverein had declared that "we will all enthusiastically

⁶¹⁰ Quoted in Ralf-Peter Martin, *Nanga Parbat: Wahrheit und Wahn des Alpinismus* (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 2002) 138. "Ich weiß sehr wohl, den Wert der Bergsteiger in der Gesamtheit der deutschen Menschen des deutschen Sportes zu schätzen und zu würdigen, denn die Bergsteiger brauche ich nicht das Kämpfen zu lehren, weil Bergsteigen selbst kämpfen bedeutet."

follow the call of our Kaiser. The struggle with the powers of the Alps has steeled us for the struggle against our enemies.”⁶¹¹ In many documents spanning the first half of the twentieth century, Germans considered mountaineering not just as sport but also a testing ground for the nation, a place where German mettle could be proven against the powers of nature, and therefore also against their political enemies.

Bechtold invokes the theme of struggle in his preface, noting that, although catastrophe had claimed the lives of Willy Merkl and his companions, the “spirit of the German mountaineer would not be deterred.”⁶¹² Bechtold’s identification of a German *Geist* of alpinism establishes a nationalist tone immediately, proposing a specifically German propensity to climb in the Himalaya. Indeed, this *Geist*, hardened by the disaster on Nanga Parbat in 1934, elevated the mountain to “a legacy, a duty,” that required German mountaineers to dedicate “all German resources to Nanga Parbat.”⁶¹³ The repeated identification of spirit, power, legacy and duty as specifically German traits elevates the language of the alpinist’s struggle from an individual physical endeavor to a national, metaphysical struggle, reducing the individual to a representative in service of the nation. As the German mountaineer ascends to the summit, the whole nation ascends with him.

As Bechtold begins the actual story of the 1934 expedition, he describes the preparations undertaken by Merkl and his companions. Merkl had chosen his companions according to his “painstakingly responsible manner” for the “difficult fight on the

⁶¹¹ MDÖAV (1914): 201. “An unsere Mitglieder! ... Begeistert folgen wir alle dem Rufe unseres Kaisers. Der Kampf mit den Gewalten der Alpennatur hat uns gestählt für den Kampf mit unseren Feinden und gegen die Mühsal der kommenden Zeit.”

⁶¹² Bechtold 1. “... der Geist der deutschen Bergsteiger ließ das nicht zu.”

⁶¹³ Bechtold 1. “Es war uns beiden klar geworden, daß aus dem unbekümmerten Zug zum Kantsch und zum Nanga ein Vermächtnis, eine Verpflichtung erwachsen war, die uns zwangen, alle deutschen Kräfte für den Nanga Parbat einzusetzen.”

mountain.”⁶¹⁴ The preparations to get to Nanga Parbat were difficult, requiring political and diplomatic maneuvers that were a worthy “field of operations for Merkl’s organizational talent.”⁶¹⁵ Once the necessary funding and permissions were secure, Merkl divided up preparatory tasks among the expedition’s members. Alfred Drexel was assigned the job of gathering the equipment for members and the “coolies” (local porters hired in India) while Welzenbach was placed in the role of “calorie master,” a position that invited numerous special requests for food and drink from his colleagues.⁶¹⁶

These preparations did not take place during an extended vacation; all expedition members were expected to sacrifice their free time and energy. Everyone continued working at their normal careers, which resulted in many sleepless nights. Apartments were full of gear as it arrived from sport shops and other suppliers. The testing of cameras, the improvement of the dark room tent for the development of film, and the testing of scientific instruments filled their schedules. Traveling to Hamburg, Bechtold and expedition physician Bernard consulted with a Professor Brauer regarding his “rich experience with [the] modern high-altitude physiology institute.”⁶¹⁷ The main concern here was with their stoves, which they tested in a high-altitude simulation chamber. Later, these experiments would prove useful; their native cooks, Ramona and Nima Dorje, would be very excited about these devices. After 7000 kg of gear arrived at an

⁶¹⁴ Bechtold 12. “Willy Merkl hatte in seiner verantwortungsbewußten Art zum schweren Kampf um den Berg sich Männer gewählt, von denen er wußte, daß jeder an seinem Platz der ihm gestellten Aufgabe gewachsen sei.”

⁶¹⁵ Bechtold 12. “Merkl’s Organisationstalent fand ein würdiges Betätigungsfeld.”

⁶¹⁶ Bechtold 13. “Welzenbach war als der Kalorienmeister der Expedition am meisten bestürmt mit den Sonderwünschen seiner Kameraden.”

⁶¹⁷ Bechtold 13. “Zu diesen und anderen Studienzwecken fuhren Bernard, der Expeditionsarzt, und ich einmal nach Hamburg, wo uns Professor Brauer die reichen Erfahrungen seines modernen höhenphysiologischen Instituts zur Verfügung stellte.”

apartment christened “Expedition Camp Munich,” two members spent a week dividing it all into 23 kg packages. One day Merkl received the telephone call: “Expedition camp here; we are ready.”⁶¹⁸ Where a chaotic mess of gear had once packed the room, there were only clean crates, sacks and trunks, “lovingly numbered and carefully labeled as to their contents.”⁶¹⁹ As the team lugged their prodigious load to the train station, they exulted that “the first stage of the expedition lay behind us.”⁶²⁰ The reduction of chaos into the order of carefully labeled boxes does not only convey a sense of good organization, but also of infallibility. Merkl’s leadership passed its first test, qualifying the expedition for their attempt on Nanga Parbat.

These passages describe the expedition’s camaraderie and discipline in military terms. From Merkl’s selection of mountaineers who were up to the challenge of the “fight on the mountain,” to the image of Merkl marshaling his “organizational talent” upon a worthy “field of operations,” and finally to the military-style diction of “expedition camp here; we are ready,” Bechtold confirms Merkl’s ability to bring out the best in his troops. In obeying his orders, they cheerfully sacrifice their evenings and spare time to achieve the expedition’s goals. This preparatory stage also acts as a dress rehearsal for the coordination and teamwork that will be required on Nanga Parbat, and Bechtold’s portrait of his fellow climbers indicates that Merkl’s choice of team members and his ability to guide their activities will assure the expedition’s success.

When the first group left Munich for Genoa, the nation makes its first appearance in the text: “the entire train station pulsed with people: relatives, friends and press

⁶¹⁸ Bechtold 14. “Hier Expeditionslager, wir sind fertig.”

⁶¹⁹ Bechtold 14. “Wo noch vor kurzem ein wüster Haufen Lasten den Raum engte, waren jetzt nur noch sauber angestrichene Kisten, Säcke und Koffer, liebevoll nummeriert und sorgfältig nach Zweckbestimmung in Listen eingetragen.”

⁶²⁰ Bechtold 14. “Die erste Etappe der Expedition lag hinter uns.”

photographers. Accompanied by roaring cries of “Heil!” and the waving of handkerchiefs, the train pulled out of the station.”⁶²¹ Indeed, many a “friend of mountaineering had sacrificed his weekend in order to see the train off.”⁶²² A photograph included in the book corroborates Bechtold’s description of this scene. In it, four expedition members are leaning out the window, one grasping a well-wisher’s hand, another giving the Hitler salute, and two others holding up a flag. Text and photo combine to suggest that this is an endeavor of national importance that warrants the public’s “sacrifice” of a weekend and the attention of the press. The photograph represents the event as a spontaneous outburst of national pride and promotes the idea that this is more than just a mountaineering expedition; it is an extension of the nation, an attempt to prove that Germany’s star is ascendant once again.

Upon leaving Germany, the narrative shifts to descriptions of the strange lands in which the climbers find themselves. Bechtold’s use of European criteria to judge Indian culture and landscape indicates the extent to which his European consciousness remains present in the narrative. After describing the arrival in India of the first group, sent ahead to finalize arrangements there, Bechtold begins to compare European and “Asiatic” cultures. He writes that, “through the helpful support of all German and British offices, the various business items were settled in a European tempo. Contrary to the Asiatic sense of time, the first group traveled expeditiously about India.”⁶²³ It is clear here that Bechtold prefers European punctuality to what he perceives as native inability to order

⁶²¹ Bechtold 14. “Unter brausenden Heilrufen und Tücherschwenken fuhr der Zug aus der Halle.”

⁶²² Bechtold 14. “Mancher Bergfreund hatte sein Wochenende geopfert, um bei der Abfahrt am Zuge zu sein.”

⁶²³ Bechtold 14. “Durch die hilfsbereite Unterstützung aller deutschen und englischen Stellen wurden diese Geschäfte in europäischem Tempo abgewickelt. Entgegen aller asiatischen Zeitlosigkeit reisten die Vier in eiligen Kreuzundquerfahrten durch Indien.”

time. Later on, he even goes so far as to state that “Bombay is actually a European harbor,” suggesting that India’s identity is being subsumed under that of the European.⁶²⁴ As the expedition continues, more evidence of this confluence emerges; at Srinigar, for example, Bechtold effuses that “Srinigar is like Venice, but authentically Oriental. The Ihelum river is the Grand Canal. People and houses press upon the river, upon which all life and activity takes place.”⁶²⁵ Bechtold’s comparison mixes the geographies of India and Europe while maintaining distinct boundaries between their cultures.

These cultural boundaries also apply to Bechtold’s categorization of the native inhabitants as military subjects obedient to German leadership. In Darjeeling, “the starting point of the British Everest expeditions and Paul Bauer’s Kanchenjunga expedition [of 1929],” Bechtold describes how “over the years a militarily disciplined, highly skilled porter guild had been established, whose qualities are essential for every undertaking in the Himalaya.”⁶²⁶ The porters, incapable of marshaling themselves into a useful service class, are passive here, beneficiaries of European discipline and products of a Western military tradition. As opposed to the porters from the area around Nanga Parbat, with whom Merkl experienced trouble during the 1932 German-American Nanga Parbat expedition, these Darjeeling porters are a professionalized service class. Contracted by an Englishman, to whom these “Tigers of Darjeeling” look up to as a “caring father,” Bechtold establishes the paternal, superior tone that defines the

⁶²⁴ Bechtold 18. “Bombay ist eigentlich ein Hafen Europas, das Tor vor dem mächtigen Norden Indiens.”

⁶²⁵ Bechtold 19. “Srinigar ist ein Stück Venedig, in unverfälschten Orient umgewertet. Der Ihelumfluß ist der Canale Grande. Menschen und Häuser drängen zum Fluß, auf dem sich alles Leben und Treiben abspielt.”

⁶²⁶ Bechtold 15-16. “In Darjeeling, dem Ausgangspunkt der englischen Everest- und der Bauerschen Kantsch-Expeditionen, hat sich im Laufe der Jahre eine militärisch disziplinierte, bergsteigerisch schlagkräftige Trägergilde herangebildet, deren Qualitäten heute für jedes Himalaja-Unternehmen die unerläßliche Vorbedingung darstellen.”

relationship between climber and porter.⁶²⁷ The military character of Bechtold's language resurfaces as these "Tigers," famed for their climbing prowess and discipline, "march out in a row for inspection."⁶²⁸ Bechtold writes that they have not only been summoned by the German call for porters, but also by "the lure of Nanga Parbat," a linguistic act of transference that projects Bechtold's desires upon the porters.⁶²⁹ As the inspection proceeds, Bechtold notes "the festiveness with which these elite troops present their credentials," once again describing their porters in military terms, and finally he realizes that the "most qualified porters are all Sherpas."⁶³⁰ When Merkl arrives and contracts the porters, Bechtold describes a scene of great joy: "hats flew in the air, and all military discipline was momentarily forgotten."⁶³¹ One of the porters gave a speech and promised allegiance to their new Bara Sahib (which means, according to Bechtold, 'großer Führer,' or great leader) in their "Kampf um den Nanga Parbat."

Further evidence of Bechtold's racist attitude toward the Sherpas emerges when he describes them as they are assigned to a German climber. Each climber receives a "personal servant" to assist them on the mountain. Merkl receives "the strong, honest-looking Kitar," Welzenbach "the strong Jigme," Aschenbrenner "the good Nima Dorje," Finsterwalder "the worthy Nima Thondup," Bechtold "the clever and funny Pasang," and Wieland "the reliable-looking Kikuli, who, like his Sahib, did not smoke and loved to eat

⁶²⁷ Bechtold 16. "... Mr. Kidds, der zu den Trägern wie ein sorgender Vater steht."

⁶²⁸ Bechtold 16. "In langer Reihe traten die "Tigers" zur Vorstellung an."

⁶²⁹ Bechtold 16. "Sie waren nicht nur unserer Aufforderung, sondern auch dem Locken der weiten Fahrt und dem Ruf des Nanga Parbat gefolgt."

⁶³⁰ Bechtold 16. "Es war hochinteressant zu beobachten, mit welcher Feierlichkeit diese Elitetruppe ihre Zeugnisse vorwies." "Die bergtüchtigsten der Träger sind alle Sherpas..."

⁶³¹ Bechtold 16. "Als dann Merkl nach Abschluß dieser Vorverhandlung in Darjeeling eintraf und beim Trägerappell alle fünfunddreißig Mann verpflichtete, herrschte großer Jubel und eitel Freude."

candies.”⁶³² Bechtold’s adjectives illustrate the attributes valued by the Germans: strength, honesty, goodness, worthiness, cleverness, a sense of humor, and reliability. These characteristics, combined with the military discipline and attention to obedience mentioned earlier, make these porters the best possible companions for the expedition. It also reinforces the paternal tone struck by Bechtold when referring to their attitude towards Mr. Kidd – “as that towards a caring father” – which reinforces the inferior status of the Sherpas.

Where other European climbers describe Sherpas in general terms as amiable yet inferior companions, Bechtold draws on several different racial stereotypes as he presents the Sherpas to his readers. Sherry Ortner has written extensively about the attitudes of Western climbers towards Sherpas, who have long been viewed as the best climbing porters in the world. Climbers since the early Everest expeditions have commented on their cheerfulness, their work ethic, and their incredible physical strength. Bechtold’s account does not differ significantly from this paternal tone, but the slight differences that he does mention reveal the idiosyncracies of German attitudes towards the Sherpas. Bechtold describes the Sherpas as a mix of disparate racial attributes: “whenever 600 [porters] boisterously heave on their towering loads with an oriental sense of profit and African wildness, things get going with a massive chorus of noise.”⁶³³ This conflation of “oriental” profit-mindedness and “African wildness” indicates how Bechtold views their

⁶³² Bechtold 19. “So bekam Merkl den kräftigen, ernst blickenden Kitar, den ehemaligen Orderly von Rutledge, der 1933 die Everest-Expedition leitete; Welzenbach den starken Jigmey, Aschenbrenner den guten Nima Dorje mit dem Höhenrekord von 8300 m. Finsterwalder wurde als Begleiter der ehrwürdige Nima Thondup zugeteilt, der schon auf seine neunte große Himalajaexpedition ging, und ich bekam den gescheiterten und lustigen Pasang, einen gelehrigen Schüler Brenners auf zwei Kantschunternehmen, als Kamera-Assistenten. Wieland, der verantwortliche Mann für Trägerangelegenheiten, holte sich den zuverlässig aussehenden Kikuli, der wie sein Sahib nicht raucht und ebensogern Süßigkeiten ißt.”

⁶³³ Bechtold 20. “Wenn sich 600 Kaschmiri mit orientalischer Profitlichkeit und afrikanischer Wildheit jauchzend auf einen turmhohen Stapel Lasten werfen, dann geht das nicht ohne erhebliches Geschrei ab.”

Sherpa companions: as people who somehow manage to escape single stereotype categories, yet cannot be classified as anything European. Instead, Bechtold resorts to a storehouse of stereotypes for races he considers inferior to Europeans, describing the Sherpas by applying several different stereotypes normally reserved for Africans or Asians. Bechtold also notes that “it is astounding how they stamp through snow, barefooted in their self-fashioned straw sandals,” revealing both an admiration for their strength and surprise at the primitive equipment these porters would work with.⁶³⁴ Again invoking the military tone already evident in the text, Bechtold describes “an imposing, military view,” of “the endless column of porters crossing over the high wintry pass.”⁶³⁵

Regarding military discipline, Bechtold relates an incident that reveals a darker side of his perspective on the Sherpas. After noting that “whenever 314 coolies begin their daily struggle with the loads with loud cries, one eventually becomes accustomed to an increasing oriental laziness,” Bechtold relates what he considers an amusing anecdote:

... Lewa [leader of the porters] stands there like iron and lashes out with his thick stick on backs and heads, brutally and without hesitation, so that the stick breaks. One coolie wants to lead his own group and makes an attempt to play the leader. Lewa grabs him with both fists and throws him off of the bungalow’s veranda into the snow. One sees two legs silhouetted against the starry sky and then quickly, very quickly, running towards the packs. Asiatic leadership methods: perhaps not always the worst.⁶³⁶

⁶³⁴ Bechtold 21. “Es ist erstaunlich, wie sie bloßfüßig in selbstgeflochtenen Strohsandalen durch den Schnee stapfen.”

⁶³⁵ Bechtold 21. “Ein imposanter, beinahe militärischer Anblick, wie diese endlose Trägerkolonne den winterlichen Hochpaß überschreitet.”

⁶³⁶ Bechtold 23. “Wenn 314 Kulis ihr Tagwerk mit wüstem Geschrei beim Kampf um die Lasten täglich beginnen, dann erträgt man es allmählich mit orientalischer Gelassenheit. Nur hier im Schnee und im Dunkel der Nacht ist es wirklich schlimm. Lewa steht eisern da und haut mit seinem dicken Stecken auf Rücken und Köpfe ein, rücksichtslos und brutal, daß es nur so kracht. Ein Kuli will seine Gruppe teilen und sich selbst als Unterführer aufspielen. Lewa packt ihn mit beiden Fästen und wirft ihn durch die Veranda des Bungalows hinaus in den Schnee. Zwei Beine sieht man silhouettenhaft sich gegen den Sternenhimmel recken und dann rasch, sehr rasch nach einer Last laufen. Asiatische Führermethoden – vielleicht nicht immer die schlechtesten.”

Until the last sentence, the reader could reasonably expect that Bechtold was voicing dismay at the violence with which Lewa treats the non-Sherpa porters, but his tacit praise of “asiatic leadership methods” leaves little doubt of his appreciation of violence in the service of order. By allowing and ostensibly encouraging these methods, Bechtold illustrates how the German climbers view their expedition: a strictly hierarchical organization whose authority rests not only upon respect, but also upon the threat of violence.

If the non-Sherpa porters are one level below the Sherpas, then the Sherpas are definitely below the German sahibs. This observation is borne out by Bechtold’s description of bathing rituals: the Germans and the Sherpas bathe in different places, with the Germans enjoying the relative privacy of a hidden cove on the River Indus while the Sherpas bathe directly in front of their encampment.⁶³⁷ This seems to affirm Ortner’s observation that the Sherpas are viewed as children of nature, “innocent and unspoiled”; unburdened by European attitudes toward nakedness, the Sherpas are not ashamed of their bodies.⁶³⁸ Bechtold also reaffirms the Sherpas’ inferior status when discussing their love of the snow: “it’s a real cult, the way these boys [Burschen] carry on with the snow.”⁶³⁹ Yet another passage throws the Sherpas’ climbing abilities into question: “today the high-altitude education of the Sherpas [by the English] would be put to the test.”⁶⁴⁰ It is telling that Bechtold never questions the abilities of the German climbers.

⁶³⁷ Bechtold 28. “Die Kulis feiern ein regelrechtes Badefest. Von allen Felsriffen sieht man die braunen Gestalten in die Fluten springen. Weiter flußaufwärts baden die Sahibs in einer herrlichen Sandbucht.”

⁶³⁸ Ortner 43.

⁶³⁹ Bechtold 32. “Es ist ein wahrer Kult, den die Burschen mit dem Schnee betreiben.”

⁶⁴⁰ Bechtold 50. “Heute soll die hohe Schule der Darjeelingträger am Nanga Parbat unter Beweis gestellt werden.”

The strict divisions governing German-Sherpa relations, however, surface in the preparations for the summit. As they leave for their summit bid, Bechtold describes the scene as follows:

The whole camp is in a palpable summit fever... One porter brings forward somewhat awkwardly a floral prayer-shroud and hangs it around Willy Merkl: a sign with which the Buddhist wishes his master luck for his great journey... a porter kneels in the snow and kisses the Bara-Sahib's shoes.⁶⁴¹

Bechtold invokes the semantics of hagiography here: what is most likely a common Sherpa form of well-wishing is turned into a scene of religious significance. Merkl stands impassive, wrapped in a floral prayer-shroud, a porter kneeling and kissing his feet. Bechtold's use of the word Bara-Sahib, meaning "great leader," also connotes a sense of Führer worship, a character type certainly familiar to the Germans and also to Bechtold's audience. Bowing before Merkl, the Sherpa is transformed into, in a religious sense, an ecstatic admirer and, in terms of power relations, an inferior.

This is neither the first nor the last instance in which Bechtold presents Merkl as a heroic leader. As we have already seen, Merkl is the most elevated character in the narrative. At the beginning of Bechtold's book, it is Merkl's organizational talents and his sense for choosing a talented team of men and marshaling their strengths that makes him the leader. When he arrives to hire the porters, it is to Merkl that the porters swear allegiance. It is Merkl that gives the orders directing the expedition to move or to stay put. And when the first tragedy strikes, Merkl's reaction receives Bechtold's closest attention.

⁶⁴¹ Bechtold 48. "Das ganze Lager atmet bebende Angriffslust... Ein Träger zieht etwas unbeholfen seinen florenen Gebetsschleier hervor und hängt ihn Willy Merkl um: das Zeichen, mit dem der Lamaist seinem Herrn Glück wünscht zu einer großen Reise. Dann kommt der feierliche Augenblick des Abschiednehmens. Ein Kuli kniet im Schnee und küßt dem Bara-Sahib die Schuhe."

The first tragedy that hits the expedition occurs during the first attempt to reach the summit. High up on the mountain, Alfred Drexel, one of the expedition's members, becomes ill. Bechtold reprints an excerpt from Aschenbrenner's journal that indicates Drexel's deteriorating health: "[Drexel] complains about massive headaches and, despite his exhaustion, cannot go to sleep throughout the night."⁶⁴² The next morning, Willo Welzenbach, Drexel's tent-mate, reports that "Drexel was delirious during the night."⁶⁴³ Bechtold includes entries from Aschenbrenner's journal that confirm Drexel's declining health. Drexel was probably suffering from a combination of high-altitude sicknesses, but it was the pulmonary distress brought on by high altitude pulmonary edema, a disease that bursts the capillaries in the lungs and literally drowns the victim in his own fluids, that eventually killed Alfred Drexel.

Upon receiving the news, Merkl has to master his emotions, as the following excerpt from Merkl's diary, reprinted by Bechtold, indicates:

When I read these lines [informing Merkl of Drexel's death], the pain for my lost friend crept into my throat. Under my sunglasses the tears pressed themselves into my eyes. I had to pull myself together with all my powers, in order to maintain discipline. In the moment of this necessary *act*, an *iron peace* and *firmness* came over me...⁶⁴⁴

Bechtold's inclusion of this particular passage regarding Merkl's grief portrays Merkl as subject to his own emotions, but never a victim of them; his leadership qualities do not allow him to be anything other than master of himself. While the other expedition

⁶⁴² Bechtold 38. "Er klagt über heftige Kopfschmerzen und kann trotz Müdigkeit die ganze Nacht keinen Schlaf finden."

⁶⁴³ Bechtold 38. "Am Morgen kommt Willo in unser Zelt und erzählt uns, daß Drexel in der Nacht phantasierte."

⁶⁴⁴ Bechtold 42. "Beim Lesen dieser Zeilen schnürte mir der Schmerz um den verlorenen Freund die Kehle zu. Unter der Schneebrille pressen sich mir die Tränen in die Augen. Ich mußte mich mit aller Gewalt zusammenreißen, um Haltung zu bewahren. In diesem Augenblick notwendigen *Handelns* kam eine *eiserne Ruhe* und *Bestimmtheit* über mich..." Original emphasis.

members weep, Merkl is the only one who appears to conquer his inner grief, suppressing his suffering for the good of the expedition. Over Drexel's grave, Merkl manages to transform this terrible loss into a renewed desire for the conquest of Nanga Parbat.

Willy Merkl spoke at the grave. He chiseled out with short words the high aim for which Alfred Drexel died and said that his death had left a large hole in our group. He led our thoughts to our homeland, where Drexel's parents would grieve deeply, and then back again to Nanga Parbat, for which we still wanted to fight on, in the same iron will of struggle as our dead comrade. So it was that Merkl took our spirits into high regions, and he gave a decided sense of a military burial to the last journey of our comrade... The swastika and the black-red-white flags fluttered down into the grave. Then soil was thrown upon the grave, flowers, and evergreen juniper. Out of raw throats sounded the mountaineer's song.⁶⁴⁵

In this scene, Merkl manages an act of catharsis. Redirecting the anguish over his lost friend, he sublimates his pain into inspiration for his comrades. Bechtold's portrayal of Merkl conveys the image of a Führer, a leader who accepts the sacrifice of his followers as the necessary sacrifices toward a worthy goal.

The nationalist tone which occurs with increasing frequency toward the end of the text provides further support for a connection between Merkl and the imagery associated with the Führer. The most significant manifestation of German nationalism occurs in Bechtold's repeated mentions of the German flag. At every camp, it appears that the expedition raises the Nazi flag: "for the first time, our flags rippled against the distant glow of Nanga Parbat and Ganalo Peak"⁶⁴⁶; "as the crownpiece of the whole base camp,

⁶⁴⁵ Bechtold 42. "Willy Merkl spricht am Grabe. Er meißelt mit kurzen Worten das hohe Ziel heraus, um das Alfred Drexel gestorben ist und sagt, daß sein Tod eine große Lücke in unseren Kreis geschlagen hat. Er führt unserer Gedanken in die *Heimat* zu den tieftrauernden Eltern und wieder zurück zum Nanga Parbat, um den wir weiterkämpfen wollen, ganz im eisernen Kampfwillen unseres Toten. So reißt er unseren Geist empor in höhere Regionen und gibt dem letzten Gang des Kameraden den entschlossenen Sinn eines Soldatenbegräbnisses... Hakenkreuz und die schwarz-weiß-rote Fahne flattern hinab ins Grab. Dann fällt Erde darauf, Blumen und immergrüner Wacholder. Aus rauhen Kehlen klingt das Bergsteigerlied."

⁶⁴⁶ Bechtold 29. "Auf einer ebenen Wiese hinter dem kleinen Ort stehen unsere Zelte, wehen unsere Flaggen zum erstenmal gegen das Firmenleuchten des Nanga Parbat und des Ganalo Peak."

our flags fluttered proudly from the flagpole”⁶⁴⁷; “the flags of our tent city flapped proudly against the distant outline of Chongra Peak.”⁶⁴⁸ The flag serves as a device of possession, a proud marker that the Germans have come so far, announcing their national presence in a distant land, trumpeting their coming conquest. The flag also serves the purpose of marking the nation’s fallen: “behind us lay our dear Alfred [Drexel]... covered with the flags of the new Germany.”⁶⁴⁹

More tragedy lay in store for the expedition. On June 22, a summit party of six Germans and fourteen Sherpas left base camp “to the sounds of the Horst Wessel Song.”⁶⁵⁰ Infused with the mood of “joyous struggle,” the climbers depart for the peak.⁶⁵¹ Bechtold wondered at Welzenbach’s astonishing strength and his “immunity to the cold,” noting that Welzenbach did not wear any gloves as he used his ice axe to cut steps into the glacial ice.⁶⁵² Establishing Camp VII at 7200 meters, the climbers prepare to sally forth on the next morning.

During the night, two Sherpas fall ill, requiring an immediate descent. Bechtold volunteers to lead them down – a decision that spared him from the coming disaster. On the way down, Bechtold reports that he had to use both “eloquence” and “really coarse”

⁶⁴⁷ Bechtold 30. “Als Krönung des Ganzen flattern stolz vom Flaggenmast unsere Fahnen.”

⁶⁴⁸ Bechtold 46. “Stolz wehen die Flaggen unserer Zeltstadt gegen die Firne der Chongra Peaks.”

⁶⁴⁹ Bechtold 42. “Voraus Willy Merkl und Konsul Kapp, dahinter unser lieber Alfred, getragen von den Kameraden und bedeckt mit den Fahnen des neuen Deutschland.”

⁶⁵⁰ Bechtold 44. “Am 22. Juni verläßt die erste Partie mit sechs Sahibs und vierzehn Trägern unter den Klängen des Horst-Wessel-Lieds das Hauptlager.” The *Horst-Wessel-Lied* became a very popular song – indeed, the unofficial national anthem of Nazi Germany – after the death of Horst Wessel, a member of the SA in Berlin who was murdered by Communists in 1930. 20,000 Nazis attended the funeral, which was a publicity coup for its organizer, Joseph Goebbels.

⁶⁵¹ Bechtold 49. “Kampffreude.”

⁶⁵² Bechtold 49. “In diesem Augenblick bewundere ich seine Unempfindlichkeit gegen Kälte.”

methods to keep the sick Sherpas moving.⁶⁵³ At some point in the descent, Bechtold left the Sherpas on their own, heading down to Camp IV with as much speed as he could muster. The Sherpas came in later under their own power, totally worn out. This was not the last incident that illustrates exactly how far and to whom the idea of camaraderie was extended. Later, Aschenbrenner and Schneider stumbled into Camp IV, where they reported that the summit had not been reached due to sudden catastrophic weather conditions. Bechtold includes a section from Aschenbrenner's journal that indicated just how awful the weather had become, and also conveys again the willingness of the Germans to leave the porters behind as they escape from danger.

In the last chapter of his book – entitled with the military heading, “The Soldiers Depart, but the Regiment Remains” – Bechtold recounts the mounting death toll high on the mountain. Last seen through binoculars, Uli Wieland, high upon the ridge, was never seen again; he fell asleep on the descent, succumbing to the horrific weather, just 30 meters from the tent at Camp VII. Four Sherpas come down the ice wall, their hands and feet black and blue with frostbite, mentally exhausted, shattered and confused; Bechtold reports that “finally, around midnight, Kitar had sufficiently recovered to be able to tell us about the Golgatha-like descent.”⁶⁵⁴ Kitar related to Bechtold and the others that Merkl, Welzenbach, and two Sherpas had burrowed into the snow to escape the storm's wrath, where they were all in desperate condition. Bechtold writes about the anguish and the worry in the camp, where all of the climbers realized that every elapsed minute reduced the chance of their fellow climbers' return.

⁶⁵³ Bechtold 52-53. “Ich muß alle Beredsamkeit aufwenden und dauernd den Kranken beispringen, um die armen Kerle die Seile hinabzubringen ... Manchmal muß ich mit den kranken Trägern saugrob werden, sie möchten im Schnee sitzen und schlafen.”

⁶⁵⁴ Bechtold 58. “Endlich gegen Mitternacht ist Kitar soweit hergestellt, daß er von dem Golgatha seines Abstiegs erzählen kann.”

The last person to descend Nanga Parbat was Angtsering, Merkl's second orderly, "completely exhausted and with terrible frostbite."⁶⁵⁵ Bechtold amplifies the heroic rhetoric that finishes out the book, describing Angtsering's descent as superhuman: "he had struggled with unheard-of energy through storm and snow to Camp IV, in every step a hero."⁶⁵⁶ As he related "with unspeakable effort" the tragic tale of Merkl's fate, "interrupted only by many exhausted pauses," Angtsering described "plain and simple, just the absolutely necessary details. What this loyal man had been through and what superhuman feats he had achieved!"⁶⁵⁷ Inspired by Angtsering's example, several rescue expeditions were sent up the mountain, but the storm beat back any attempt to reach the ridge where Merkl and his companions lay dying.

The expedition finally had to face the fact that they would not be able to save Merkl and his first orderly, Gay-Lay, the only two remaining climbers known to Angtsering to be alive. Bechtold begins his eulogy for Merkl with the observation that "the inner nature that made Merkl predestined for leadership had lent him the physical strength to hold out in storm and cold to the very last."⁶⁵⁸ Gay-Lay, who could have decided to leave Merkl and descend with Angtsering, had chosen to "remain with his

⁶⁵⁵ Bechtold 60. "... völlig erschöpft und mit schweren Erfrierungen."

⁶⁵⁶ Bechtold 60. "Er hat sich mit unerhöhtem Energie durch Sturm und Schnee den Abstieg nach Lager IV erkämpft, in jedem Schritt ein Held."

⁶⁵⁷ Bechtold 61. "Mit unsäglicher Mühe und durch viele Erschöpfungspausen unterbrochen, hat der brave Angtsering erzählt, schlicht und einfach, nur das Allernotwendigste. Was hatte dieser treue Mann ausgehalten und Übermenschliches geleistet!"

⁶⁵⁸ Bechtold 61. "Die Natur, die Merkl zum prädestinierten Führer bestimmte, hatte ihm auch die körperlichen Fähigkeiten verliehen, in Sturm und Kälte bis zum Letzten auszuhalten."

Bara-Sahib and show his loyalty even unto death.”⁶⁵⁹ Bechtold calls these last hours in the ice cave the “highest example of camaraderie that the Himalaya has ever seen.”⁶⁶⁰

Bechtold ends the narrative with two observations that instruct the audience how it is supposed to interpret Merkl’s death: as a national sacrifice and as an inspiration for further expeditions. Bechtold notes that “we were unable to prepare a proper burial for them, but deep in our hearts we wanted to lay them down, as our best comrades, who had died for a great goal and for Germany.”⁶⁶¹ Bechtold’s last sentence offers an inspiring way to look at Merkl’s sacrifice for the nation: “as we looked up one more time to the glowing ridge of Nanga Parbat... we realized: how beautiful it would be, to return home victorious from this powerful mountain; but how much greater to give one’s life for such a goal, to become a path and a flame to the young hearts of future combatants.”⁶⁶² With these last words, Bechtold immortalizes the climbers as trailblazers for the German nation, worthy of the respect and emulation of coming generations of mountain climbers.

The 1934 expedition to Nanga Parbat had several consequences for German mountaineering. It became a key event in German mountaineering history, elevating Nanga Parbat to the “ Schicksalsberg der Deutschen,” the German mountain of fate. Willy Merkl and his companions were elevated to national heroes, and Merkl’s name is still used for several of the routes and features of Nanga Parbat by subsequent German

⁶⁵⁹ Bechtold 61. “Gay-Lay ... blieb mit seinem Bara Sahib und hielt ihm die Treue bis in den Tod.”

⁶⁶⁰ Bechtold 61. “Willy Merkl, der in allen Lagen und sein ganzes Leben hindurch ein guter, ein bester Kamerad gewesen ist, durfte in seinen letzten Stunden noch ein Kameradschaftsbekanntnis empfangen, wie es die Geschichte des Himalaja nicht kennt.”

⁶⁶¹ Bechtold 62. “Wir haben ihnen keinen Grab bereiten können, aber tief in unsere Herzen wollen wir sie betten, als unsere besten Kameraden, die für ein großes Ziel und für Deutschland starben.”

⁶⁶² Bechtold 64. “Als wir hier noch einmal zum Nanga, zum leuchtenden Gipfelgrat hinaufschauen, löst sich auch in unseren Herzen alles Hadern mit dem Schicksal und wir erkennen: Schön muß es sein, mit dem Siegespreis dieses gewaltigen Berges nach Hause zu kehren, größer noch ist es, sein Leben hinzugeben um solch ein Ziel, den jungen Herzen kommender Kämpfer Weg und Flamme zu werden.”

climbing expeditions. As late as 1953, Merkl's half-brother Karl Herrligkoffer led the Willy Merkl Memorial Expedition, which ended up placing Hermann Buhl on the summit. What Merkl could not achieve as a mountain climber was achieved linguistically by his successors: his name is still strongly associated with the mountain, as route descriptions of the Merkl Route, the Merkl Line, and the Merkl Saddle attest.

After the 1934 expedition, three more German expeditions traveled to Nanga Parbat, most of them ending just as disastrously as Merkl's. In 1937, an avalanche instantly killed seven German mountaineers and nine porters, and in 1938 an expedition led by Paul Bauer found the bodies of Merkl and Welzenbach. In 1939, an expedition including Heinrich Harrer and Peter Aufschnaiter planned to make another attempt, but the outbreak of war prompted the British to arrest the German climbers in India. Harrer and Aufschnaiter's escape from their internment camp was later the basis for Harrer's popular book, Seven Years in Tibet (1953). Finally, in 1953, Hermann Buhl of the Willy Merkl Memorial Expedition was the first to stand on the summit of Nanga Parbat, a symbol of the doggedly persistent German obsession with the mountain.

Bechtold's text stands at the beginning of the development of the mythology that was attached to Nanga Parbat during the 1930s. Bechtold's modification of the master narrative – order over chaos, the Führer myth, racism, military language and the praise of sacrifice – fed fuel to a national obsession that would continue into the opening days of World War II and beyond. Nonetheless, Bechtold's *Germans on Nanga Parbat* helped shape the master narrative as it coalesced around Nanga Parbat, promoting his belief in mountaineering as a national struggle that joined the mountaineer's ambition with that of the nation.

Chapter 10: A Tale of Two Films: Nanga Parbat and Der Dämon des Himalaja

While Fritz Bechtold's expedition report, *Germans on Nanga Parbat*, established the official version of the master narrative for Himalayan mountaineering, the story of how two mountaineering films collided in 1936 illustrates how the Alpenverein could work hand in hand with the Nazi state to consolidate their hegemony over alpine representation. Produced by two different Himalayan expeditions in 1934, these two films – the feature film *Der Dämon des Himalaja* (*The Demon of the Himalayas*, 1935) and the documentary film *Nanga Parbat* (1936) – demonstrate how the Alpenverein utilized the institutions of the Nazi state to ensure that their master narrative for mountains and mountaineering was the only narrative shown to the public.

In this chapter, we will see how the Alpenverein assumed a position of control in the realm of cultural production. Although they had been powerless to affect what films were shown in the Weimar Republic, their newfound powers as the sole institution of mountaineering enabled them to wield a great deal of influence over what films were screened in the Third Reich and which were not. Exploiting their connections to high officials in the Nazi state, the Alpenverein managed to quash *Demon of the Himalaya*, a film that had dared to enter into direct competition with the propagandistic documentary of the ill-fated 1934 German Nanga Parbat Expedition. This particular episode illuminates how the Alpenverein's master narrative, endorsed by the Nazi state, was able to completely shut off alternative representations and dominate the public sphere.

GÜNTHER DYHRENFURTH'S DER DÄMON DES HIMALAJA

In March 1935, the film *The Demon of the Himalaya* premiered in Zurich. Integrating the generic elements of both the feature film and the documentary, *Demon*

was filmed in the Himalayas by the 1934 International Himalaya Expedition, an expedition consisting of actors and mountaineers led by the prominent mountaineer Günther Dyhrenfurth. There was no shortage of talent on the expedition. Hans Ertl and Richard Angst, respected mountain climbers who had worked extensively with Arnold Fanck on the immensely popular mountain films of the 1920s, operated the camera for Dämon. Gustav Dießl, another veteran of Fanck's mountain films, starred in the leading role. Many of the expedition's climbers, including Ertl, also served as actors.

There was significant interest in *Demon* before it was even filmed. Dyhrenfurth's choice of personnel led the *Film-Kurier* to comment that "the enlistment of the master cameraman Richard Angst has caused an extraordinary sensation."⁶⁶³ Articles in numerous newspapers expressed excitement and anticipation. Given the success of the mountain films throughout the 1920s and early 1930s, such enthusiasm is easy to understand: Dyhrenfurth's film was to be the first feature film shot in the Himalaya.

Dyhrenfurth had enjoyed critical success before with his first documentary, *Himatschal: Der Thron der Götter* (*Himatschal: Throne of the Gods*, 1931), which he filmed during the 1930 International Himalaya Expedition. The expedition set out to climb what was then thought to be the second-highest mountain in the world, Kangchenjunga. Although adverse weather conditions defeated the climbing party, the resulting documentary film, *Himatschal*, was acclaimed with universal praise. One critic described the film's reception at the Vienna screening in the Urania theater as "an extraordinarily great success ... such a storm of applause swept through the Uraniasaal, with such strength and warmth; one seldom has the opportunity to hear such

⁶⁶³ "Himalaya-Expedition mit deutschen Kameraleuten," Film-Kurier [Berlin] 9 April 1934. "... die Verpflichtung des Kamerameisters Richard Angst hat in interessierten Kreisen außerordentlichen Aufsehen erregt."

excitement.”⁶⁶⁴ In Munich, another critic noted that “the film really does produce something extraordinary, earning the lively applause of the packed cinema house, which only closed after numerous calls for a repeat showing.”⁶⁶⁵ Charles Duvanel, cameraman for the 1930 International Himalaya Expedition, was praised for achieving “the crowning achievement of the master cameraman”:

Outstanding composition, lots of vibrancy and good ideas. The camera wanders incessantly throughout the expedition camp, observes the captivating natural environment, is a mute witness as bold climbers wrest their success in hard struggle with the mountain, meter by meter.⁶⁶⁶

The quality of *Himatschal* impressed both the specialized audiences of mountaineers and the general public alike. And as the leader of both the expedition and the film’s production, Dyhrenfurth earned the respect of many within the mountaineering and film communities.

Building on the successes of the 1930 expedition, Dyhrenfurth formed the 1934 International Himalaya Expedition for two purposes: to explore and climb unconquered Himalayan peaks, and to produce a film about mountaineering in the Himalaya. The expedition’s viability depended upon the film work, since the majority of their financing came from a small Berlin production company, India-Ton, owned by Gottfried Treviranus, a former Reichsminister from the Brüning government. Treviranus agreed to

⁶⁶⁴ “Filmmachrichten. Himatschal, der Thron der Götter,” Neue Freie Presse [Vienna] 26 February 1931. “einen außerordentlich großen Erfolg ... es ist ein Sturm von Beifall über den großen Uraniasaal gerauscht, in einer Kraft und Wärme, wie man ihn in diesem Haufe nur selten zu hören Gelegenheit hatte.”

⁶⁶⁵ Bayerischer Kurier [Munich] 17 March 1931. “... der Film stellt in der Tat etwas Außerordentliches dar, und so lohnte ihn auch das gut besetzte Haus mit lebhaftem Beifall, der auf zahlreiche Wiederholungen schließen lassen dürfte.”

⁶⁶⁶ “Vor der weißen Leinwand. Himatschal, der Thron der Götter,” Münchener Post 18 March 1931. “die Meisterleistung eines Kameramanns” ... “Ausgezeichnete Bildeinstellung, viel Lebendigkeit und gute Einfälle. Unablässig wandert die Kamera im Expeditionslager herum, sieht sich die bezaubernde Natur an, ist stumme Zeugin, wie verwegene Kletterer dem widerstrebenden Berg im harten Kampf Meter für Meter abringen.”

supply the majority of the funding on one condition: the resulting film would have to be a feature film centering on a love story. Given Dyhrenfurth's earlier success with *Himatschal*, it seems reasonable to assume that Dyhrenfurth would have preferred to produce another documentary work.

In retrospect, Dyhrenfurth most likely would have preferred to have rejected the funding from India-Ton as well. Upon the expedition's arrival in India, crucial bank deposits that had been agreed upon had not yet arrived. Pushing forward to Srinigar, where another deposit from India-Ton was supposed to have been transferred, Dyhrenfurth was again disappointed. Dyhrenfurth and his wife were forced to borrow money to keep the expedition moving. Dyhrenfurth only found out the reasons for India-Ton's erratic financial behavior after he returned to Switzerland. On 30 June 1934, Treviranus's life had been in danger during the Night of the Long Knives, when Hitler ordered the murder of several SA officials, including the SA leader Ernst Röhm. Treviranus had fled to Holland, gone underground, and India-Ton accordingly declared bankruptcy – just two days before the first payment was to be transferred to Dyhrenfurth in Bombay.⁶⁶⁷

Financial difficulties also led to management difficulties. After India-Ton declared bankruptcy, the Swiss firm Tramontana picked up the contract. There was a catch, however; Tramontana sent a Hungarian filmmaker named Matton to India with a fully rewritten script, along with instructions that all mountaineering activities were to take a back seat to film production. Dyhrenfurth and Ertl argued vehemently with Matton and refused to change the priorities of their expedition, which led Tramontana to

⁶⁶⁷ Peter Mierau, Nationalsozialistische Expeditionspolitik. Deutsche Asien-Expeditionen 1933-1945 (Munich: Herbert Utz Verlag, 2006) 225-226.

withdraw their financial backing. In order to keep the expedition afloat, the Dyhrenfurths were forced to once again use their private funds to finance the project.⁶⁶⁸

Dyhrenfurth's feature film *Demon of the Himalaya* had a mixed reception. Critics responded to the film in much the same manner as they had to Arnold Fanck's mountain films; the alpine landscape was very impressive, but the plot was melodramatic kitsch:

Mountains have recently been used as a really atmospheric backdrop, as we know from a few films. But whoever has the high ambition to make the most powerful mountains in the world into the background and backstory for a feature film has to be careful that people and their touching little affairs of the heart don't appear too diminutive on the screen.⁶⁶⁹

Another critic lamented Dyhrenfurth's decision to produce a feature film in the Himalaya, juxtaposing the innately heroic nature of a Himalayan mountaineering expedition with the cheap theatricality of big-city productions. This critic claimed that

a Himalayan expedition is a truly heroic affair; a plot full of intrigues and emotional complexes of a completely private nature is big-city sensationalism. Such plots have nothing to do with the magnificent landscape of the mountains and the heroism of research.⁶⁷⁰

Overall, however, critics felt that the film's saving grace lay in its thematic and cinematic content. Noting that, "in Dyhrenfurth's film, *Demon of the Himalaya*, some of the great majesty of the timeless mountain world has been captured," one critic described the film's strength as follows:

⁶⁶⁸ Mierau 226. This paragraph relies exclusively on Mierau's conversation with Dyhrenfurth's son, Norman G. Dyhrenfurth, on 5 September 2002.

⁶⁶⁹ W. Fiedler, "Der Dämon des Himalaya," *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* [Berlin] 21 March 1935. "Berge sind zuweilen als recht stimmungsvolle Kulisse ausgenutzt worden, das wissen wir aus manchem Film. Aber wer den hohen Ehrgeiz hat, das gewaltigste Gebirge der Welt zum Hintergrund und Untergrund für einen Spielfilm zu wählen, muß sich in acht nehmen, daß die mächtige Natur die Menschen mit ihren rührend kleinen Herzensangelegenheiten nicht einfach an die Wand spielt."

⁶⁷⁰ H.J.F., "Der Dämon des Himalaya," *Berliner Tageblatt* 21 May 1935. "Eine Himalaya-Expedition ist eine wahrhaft heroische Tat – eine mit Intrigen und Gefühlskomplexen durchaus privater Natur angefüllte Spielhandlung ist ein Grossstadtreiz, der mit der grossartigen Landschaft und dem Heroismus der Forschung nicht zur Einheit gebracht werden kann."

A major theme is boldly attacked here. The struggle of mankind with the mythical powers of nature. In the high valleys of Tibet, the indigenous people still believe that the mountains are protected by dangerous spirits that will not allow a human foot to desecrate the holy solitude of the peak. These mysterious powers reveal themselves wonderfully and believably in the frightful storms, in the thundering avalanches of stone and snow, which have been captured in incredibly expressive sequences.⁶⁷¹

Critics also praised the technical achievements of the film crew and the actors. A photograph of Hans Ertl, wearing full mountaineering gear while filming at 7775 meters, was published in several newspapers as a testament to the incredible technical and logistical difficulties of camerawork at such high altitudes. The overall critical reaction to the film, then, was ambivalent; some felt that the film had captured a landscape as never before, while others complained that Dyhrenfurth had mistakenly tried to turn what would have been an outstanding documentary into a mediocre feature film.

Within the mountaineering community, however, Dyhrenfurth's *Demon* encountered ferocious opposition that ultimately resulted in the film's removal from theaters. Paul Bauer, a prominent member of the Alpenverein as well as the leader of the Department of Mountaineering within the German Association for Sports⁶⁷², worked with Julius Trumpp, the press official for the Department of Mountaineering, to coordinate efforts to have the film banned by the Nazi authorities. They were joined by Alfred Buckel, leader of the German Alpine Rescue Service, the Deutsche Bergwacht, who supported Bauer and Trumpp's campaign by publishing position statements in the press

⁶⁷¹ W. Fiedler, "Der Dämon des Himalaya." *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung* [Berlin] 21 March 1935. "in dem von Dyhrenfurth abgedrehten Film vom 'Dämon des Himalaya' ist etwas von der Größe und Unnahbarkeit dieser ewigen Bergwelt festgehalten." ... "Ein großes Thema wird hier mutig angepackt. Das Ringen des Menschen mit den mythischen Kräften der Natur. In den Eingeborenen der tibetanischer Hochtäler lebt der Glaube, daß das Gebirge von gefährlichen Geistern bewacht werde, die nicht dulden wollen, daß ein menschlicher Fuß die heilige Gipfeleinsamkeit entweiht. Wunderbar glaubhaft offenbaren sich diese geheimnisvollen Mächte in den furchtbaren Stürmen, in donnernd niederbrechenden Stein- und Schneelawinen, die in bewundernswert eindrucksvollen Aufnahmen festgehalten worden sind."

⁶⁷² Fachamt Bergsteigen in the Deutscher Reichsbund für Leibesübungen.

and writing letters to the Reichskulturkammer, the organization dedicated to overseeing cultural affairs in the Third Reich.

Dämon was attacked in two ways: first, through a devastating critique published by the Alpenverein, which was then published word-for-word in newspapers and other alpine journals; and second, by the behind-the-scenes maneuvers of key players within the institutions of alpinism. The intense criticism of the film within the mountaineering community began with a review by Hans Barth, the editor of the Alpenverein's Mitteilungen. Barth described the film as "difficult to judge."⁶⁷³ Like the critiques published in the press, Barth found Ertl's camerawork exemplary and the non-staged scenes "instructive and captivating."⁶⁷⁴ Although the documentary film elements – "the expedition images, the carrying of equipment and the establishment of camps, ritual monastery scenes, the porter strike, all accompanied by gorgeous images of the high mountains" – gripped the audience's attention, the feature film elements "make the audience sometimes feel as if they were there, yet at other times leads to contradictions."⁶⁷⁵ Barth reserved his harshest commentary for a scene near the end of the film in which the film's hero, Dr. Will, challenges the "demon" of the film's title and is swept off the mountain by a ghostly hand. Dr. Will falls through a glacial crevasse and lands in a monastery of Tibetan lamas, where he dies. The monastery scene, which was apparently meant to show the last thoughts of a mountaineer dying in the Himalaya, confused the audience; Barth complained "that it only became clear that these images were supposed to be the dying man's last thoughts on the peak after the final shot of him

⁶⁷³ Hans Barth, "Der Dämon des Himalaja" MDÖAV (1935): 133. "... nicht leicht zu beurteilen."

⁶⁷⁴ Barth 133. "... lehrreich und fesselnd."

⁶⁷⁵ Barth 133. "Die Expeditionsbilder, das Vorwärtsbringen der Lasten und Lager, rituelle Klosterszenen, Trägerstreik, stets von prächtigen Hochgebirgsbildern begleitet ... zwingt teils zum Mitfühlen, reizt teils zum Widerspruch."

dying on the peak, battered by a snowstorm.”⁶⁷⁶ Barth rejected such “mountaineering impossibilities,” claiming that “the best film is the one that doesn’t need any textual explanations, but this film could have used some. Too bad about all the effort and work. Only changes and editing can rescue this film.”⁶⁷⁷

While Barth’s review was scathing but fair, a Mr. Lauper, writing for the *Alpine Journal* of the British Alpine Club, eviscerated the film mercilessly. The only positive note in the review praises Ertl’s cinematic work, images that make “one [feel] the spell of travel, of exploration, of mountain adventure.” The potency of these images – “few, too few alas!” – point to a wasted opportunity: “It is a thousand pities that Professor Dyhrenfurth could not content himself with a picture showing the life of the natives, the monasteries, the strange dances of the monks, the savage grandeur of valleys and mountain peaks.” Instead, the reviewer describes the plot as “foolish beyond words” and “idiotic,” sarcastically describing the same final scene criticized by Barth that “culminates in a hysterical challenge to the gods of the heights by a lunatic after the previous destruction of his companions. This madman is then himself also promptly eliminated by a ghostly hand rushing diagonally across the screen (tableau!).” The vicious review ends with the reviewer expressing his disappointment:

And one returns home after the show, with a heart heavy with anger and disgust that persons travelling in one of the most magnificent and picturesque regions of the world should not have availed themselves of their opportunities, but instead have wasted time, energy and money in concocting a film of the most inane tale ever invented.⁶⁷⁸

⁶⁷⁶ Barth 133. “... daß diese Bilder wahrscheinlich die letzten Gedanken des auf dem Gipfel Sterbenden sein sollen, würde nur klar, wenn das Schlußbild ihn wieder niedergebrochen auf dem Schneesturmumtosten Gipfel zeigte.”

⁶⁷⁷ Barth 133. “... bergsteigerische Unwahrscheinlichkeiten” ... ““Der beste Film ist der, der keine textlichen Einschübe zur Erklärung braucht. Hier wären manche nötig. Schade um die viele Mühe und Arbeit. Nur Ändern und hier und dort Kürzen kann noch Rettung bringen.”

⁶⁷⁸ H. Lauper, “Mountaineering Film.” *Alpine Journal* 47, May 1935, 155-6.

Lauper's review would not have been significant in the wider debates surrounding Dämon had it not become a key component of the arsenal assembled by Bauer, Trumpp and Buckel to destroy Dyhrenfurth's film. Shortly after its publication in the Alpine Journal, Lauper's review was translated on Paul Bauer's letterhead.⁶⁷⁹ Lauper's review began appearing, in German translation, both in the popular press and in appeals written by Bauer, Trumpp and Buckel to the Reich Cultural Office to prevent the screening of Dämon. Given the longstanding tradition of British mountaineering and the mutual respect between the Alpine Club and the Alpenverein, Lauper's review was valuable to Dämon's detractors for two reasons: first, it came from a third-party, ostensibly independent source located in a country highly respected for its mountaineering achievements; and second, it was useful in petitions to Nazi authorities because it touched on the issue of national pride. Why should the Third Reich tolerate a film produced and distributed by a Swiss firm, when the British obviously found the film to be rubbish?

Yet there was much more at stake here than the time and money wasted on a film of dubious quality. Dyhrenfurth's film was scheduled to enter into direct competition with another film that had the full institutional support of the Alpenverein and the Reich Sport Leader: the documentary film *Nanga Parbat*.

THE DOCUMENTARY FILM *NANGA PARBAT*

On 8 February 1936, the film *Nanga Parbat* premiered in the Ufa-Palast in Munich. Fritz Bechtold and Peter Müllritter, members of the 1934 Nanga Parbat Expedition that had ended in disaster with the deaths of Willy Merkl and Willo Welzenbach, had taken a great deal of footage that captured the expedition's travel to

⁶⁷⁹ Central Archive of the German Alpenverein. Akt: 02.02.1994.0002 (Dämon des Himalaja). The English version of Lauper's review is transcribed on the front, and the German translation is on the back.

Nanga Parbat and their attempt to summit the Himalayan peak. This footage, taken with a Siemens Schmalfilm camera, was transferred to 35-mm reels and edited by Frank Leberecht. The film was both a critical and commercial success.⁶⁸⁰

The timing of *Nanga Parbat*'s release coincided with the end of the 1936 Winter Olympics in Garmisch-Partenkirchen. Although the original date for the premiere had been set for 9 January 1936, an announcement published throughout Germany publicized that the premiere date had been moved "at the Reichssportführer's request, in connection with the Olympic Winter Games in Munich."⁶⁸¹ The film was clearly an important propaganda vehicle for the Nazi state; State Minister Adolf Wagner, Reichssportführer von Tschammer und Osten, Minister of the Treasury Schwarz, State Councillor Dr. Boepple, Colonel Himer of the Wehrmacht, the Munich mayor Dr. Tempel, President Weber of the Bavarian parliament, and several members of the Olympic committee attended the premiere. International and domestic spectators present for the Winter Olympics were also in the audience. The film's tragic ending was apparently so powerful that the audience waited several minutes before bursting into applause. Bechtold and Müllritter enjoyed a standing ovation, which they accepted in the name of their fallen comrades.⁶⁸²

Orchestrations for the unimpeded success of *Nanga Parbat* began nearly a year in advance, and one element of this campaign was a sustained attack on Dyhrenfurth's film.

⁶⁸⁰ Boguslaw Drewniak, Der deutsche Film 1938-1945. Ein Gesamtüberblick (Düsseldorf: DrosteVerlag, 1987) 290.

⁶⁸¹ "Ein Nanga-Parbat-Film." Der Angriff, Berlin. January 21, 1936. A collection of articles in the Central Archive of the DAV reveals how widely this decision was reported. "... auf Wunsch des Reichssportführers im Anschluß an die Olympischen Winterspiele in München."

⁶⁸² "Nanga Parbat. Welturaufführung im Ufa-Palast," Völkischer Beobachter 19 February 1936. Wugg Retzer, "Nanga Parbat als Forderung und Anrecht. Zur Münchner Uraufführung des Expeditionsfilmes." Münchner Neueste Nachrichten February 19, 1936. Central Archive of the German Alpenverein; DHS Files; Himalaja Presse 1931-1938.

Alfred Buckel, leader of the mountain rescue service, the Deutsche Bergwacht, informed Bauer in May 1935 that the Bergwacht had appealed to the Reichskulturkammer for a compulsory modification of Dyhrenfurth's film. At the beginning of *Demon*, Dyhrenfurth had included a dedication to the mountaineers of the 1934 Deutsche Nanga Parbat Expedition who had died. This outraged Buckel as well as Bauer, since the spectacular deaths of Merkl, Wieland, Welzenbach and Drexler had gripped the national imagination the year before. Buckel accused Dyhrenfurth of attempting to profit from the publicity surrounding their deaths, writing to the Reichskulturkammer that "the Germans who died on Nanga Parbat in 1934 in their pursuit of a serious scientific and athletic goals do not deserve to be used as cheap advertisements for such a film."⁶⁸³ Buckel urged the Reichskulturkammer to force Tramontana, the Swiss company that had produced and distributed *Demon*, to cut out the dedication at the beginning of the film.

Just two days later, Buckel reported triumphantly to Bauer that the Ministry of Propaganda in Berlin, supporting a decision made by the propaganda office in Munich, had responded favorably to Buckel's petition. All Munich theaters showing *The Demon of the Himalaya* were instructed to cut out the dedication to the fallen Nanga Parbat mountaineers, and the Ministry of Propaganda issued a similar order for the entire nation.⁶⁸⁴ Although Dyhrenfurth had probably chosen the dedication for entirely laudable reasons, the film was forcibly removed from the master narrative surrounding the 1934 Nanga Parbat expedition.

⁶⁸³ Letter from Alfred Buckel to Paul Bauer, 18 May 1935. Central Archive of the German Alpenverein: Himalaja Presse 1931-1938. "Die am Nanga-Parbat im Jahre 1934 in Verfolg eines ernsten bergsteigerisch wissenschaftlichen Zieles gestorbenen Deutschen verdienen es jedenfalls nicht, daß sie in reklamehafter Form als Aushängeschild für ein solches Filmfabrikat verwendet werden."

⁶⁸⁴ Letter from Alfred Buckel to Paul Bauer, May 20, 1935. Central Archive of the DAV: Himalaja Presse 1931-1938.

This initial success was only the first action in a yearlong campaign against Dyhrenfurth's film waged by Bauer, Buckel and Trumpp. On 23 May 1935, Buckel notified Trumpp of his successful petition to the Reichskulturkammer, which gave Trumpp the necessary support to begin disparaging the film using his office as press official for the Department of Mountaineering within the German Association for Sports.

Trumpp wasted very little time. In a disparaging review, published in the *Mitteilungen des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen*, Trumpp continued the attack on Dyhrenfurth's film.⁶⁸⁵ Admitting that film criticism was not the purpose of the *Mitteilungen*, Trumpp nonetheless felt compelled to voice his critique "from a mountaineer's perspective." Trumpp stated disingenuously that the film had been sharply criticized already, referring to the most devastating appraisal of *Demon*: Lauper's review in the *Alpine Journal*, which did not accurately reflect the average tone of the film's reception.

Following in Lauper's vociferous critical vein, Trumpp described *Demon* as "unbelievably risible," describing the film's protagonist as "no mountaineer, but rather an uncontrollable weakling in a hysterical "heroic" pose."⁶⁸⁶ Trumpp especially took offense at the fact that the film had been dedicated to the dead climbers of the 1934 Nanga Parbat expedition: "mountaineers must view this as blasphemy, that German men of the Himalayas should be somehow related to this kitsch."⁶⁸⁷ Trumpp also attacked Dyhrenfurth personally, claiming that, "in order to get one more shot at a Himalayan

⁶⁸⁵ Julius Trumpp, "Ein Himalajafilm, der schärfste Ablehnung verdient," Deutscher Bergsteiger- und Wanderverband, *Mitteilungen des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen*, Nr. 9 (June 1935): 129-130.

⁶⁸⁶ Trumpp 129. "unglaublich lächerlich" ... "kein Bergsteiger, sondern ein unbeherrschter Schwächling in hysterischer 'Helden'-pose."

⁶⁸⁷ Trumpp 129. "Der Bergsteiger muß es als Blasphemie betrachten, daß die deutschen Himalajamänner mit diesem Kitsch in irgendeinen Zusammenhang gebracht werden."

expedition, Professor Dyhrenfurth dispensed with all of the consideration and caution that his profession and position should have demanded of him.”⁶⁸⁸ Trumpp accused Dyhrenfurth of trying to exploit the tragedy of the 1934 Nanga Parbat expedition for his own financial benefit, hinting at “enterprising businessmen” behind the whole affair.⁶⁸⁹ The film’s pretensions to be both a documentary and feature film in the Himalayas, wrote Trumpp, were doomed from the beginning; dominated by “sensationalism, capitalism and the demon of money,” the film and its production team lost their claim to anything of cultural value.⁶⁹⁰ Dyhrenfurth did not have the proper “strength of character” (“Charakterstärke”) to produce a film true to the Himalaya and the heroic deeds that were performed there; hence, “one should take the strongest possible position against the abuses perpetrated by the film producers, who are deriving benefit from the experiences and memorialization of others.”⁶⁹¹

Yet even the removal of the dedication to the dead Nanga Parbat climbers, which should have mitigated Trumpp’s vitriolic review, did not achieve what Bauer, Buckel and Trumpp wanted: a complete prohibition of the screening of *Demon of the Himalaya*. And when news of the successful transfer of the 1934 Nanga Parbat footage from the smaller Schmalfilm format to full 35-mm size became public in October 1935, a full assault on *Demon* was soon underway.

⁶⁸⁸ Trumpp 129-130. “Der Möglichkeit zuliebe, noch einmal in den Himalaja zu kommen, hat Professor Dyhrenfurth alle Rücksichtnahmen auf die Hemmungen, die ihm Beruf und Stellung auferlegen sollte, geopfert.”

⁶⁸⁹ Trumpp 130. “... geschäftstüchtige Unternehmer ...”

⁶⁹⁰ Trumpp 130. “... Sensation, Geschäft, und [der] Dämon Geld ...”

⁶⁹¹ Trumpp 130. “... gegen den Mißbrauch, den der Filmproduzent hier mit den Andenken und den Erlebnissen anderer treibt, muß man allerschärfstens Stellung nehmen.”

On 16 October 1935, Paul Bauer filed a petition with the Reich Film Office to have the film removed from German theaters. Rather than attack the film on its aesthetic merits,⁶⁹² Bauer chose to pursue a decidedly more insidious and ideological line, asserting that the film was the product of Jewish machinations:

at this point in time in the Third Reich, when the fundamental law of nations clearly identifies the Jews, and international Jewry, as the opponents of Nazi Germany, we should have no patience for Jewish business people who try to bring their shady deals into the Reich; these Jewish businessmen are clearly exploiting the current interest in faraway mountains. German mountaineers and the broader cinema-going public should not have to support such Jewish financial sleight-of-hand, and that alone should keep people away from the theaters.⁶⁹³

By describing *Demon* as a Jewish product designed to profit from dead German climbers, Bauer quite consciously employed a tactic that defined the film and its Swiss producers as enemies of the Nazi state. Furthermore, Bauer asserted – wrongly and perhaps consciously so – that Dyhrenfurth himself was Jewish, which, by corollary, also defined Dyhrenfurth personally as an enemy of the state. Apparently, Bauer believed that such measures were necessary to have this “film, which is alien to both the German people and the German nation,” removed from German theaters.⁶⁹⁴

⁶⁹² The film was rated “künstlerisch wertvoll” by the Reichsfilmstelle. Advertisement in: Hamburger Fremdenblatt 4 July 1935.

⁶⁹³ Letter from Paul Bauer, Leiter des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen, to the Reichsleitung of the Reichsfilmstelle in the Reichskulturkammer, 16 October 1935. Central Archive of the German Alpenverein, Himalaja Presse 1931-1938. “Zu einem Zeitpunkt, da im Dritten Reich ein völkisches Urgesetz dem Kampf gegen das Judentum ganz klare Formen gibt und das Weltjudentum im Kampf mit dem nationalsozialistischen Deutschland steht, ist es nicht anhängig zu dulden, daß jüdische Wirtschaftsträger im Reich finstere Geschäfte machen, wie es hier der Fall ist in Ausnutzung der Tatsache, daß das Interesse für fremde Gebirgsländer, insbesondere für den Himalaja, in den Vordergrund gerückt ist. Zurückhaltung ist aber geboten schon allein mit Rücksicht auf den Umstand, daß die deutschen Bergsteiger und ein breites Filmpublicum es nicht nötig haben sollten, zu jüdischen Finanzierungskünsten solcher Form beizutragen.”

⁶⁹⁴ Letter from Bauer to Reichsfilmstelle, 16 October 1935. “... volksfremd, ja staatsfremd anzusehende Film.”

Bauer's effort to have the film removed from theaters was supported by a similar petition made by the Döring-Film-Werke GmbH, the production firm responsible for *Nanga Parbat*. In a letter sent the same day as Bauer's, Döring appealed to the Reichskulturkammer to have *Demon* removed from theaters. Shortly thereafter, *The Demon of the Himalaya* disappeared from the cinema. The premiere of *Nanga Parbat* could now proceed without the slightest competition.

NANGA PARBAT: THE VISUAL MASTER NARRATIVE

From the beginning, *Nanga Parbat* had enjoyed institutional support from both mountaineering organizations and the Nazi state. Reich Sport Leader Hans von Tschammer und Osten had supported the 1934 Deutsche Nanga Parbat Expedition with the full weight of his office, assisting the expedition with the acquisition of their visas and climbing permits and bestowing legitimacy upon an expedition sanctioned by the Nazi state. The Reichssportführer extended his support for the expedition to the film that resulted from it, intervening even in the details of its premiere by arranging the date to coincide with the end of the 1936 Winter Olympics. The timing of the premiere insured that an international audience of athletes, coaches and sports enthusiasts, as well as prominent Nazi functionaries, would be present for the film's screening at the concluding ceremonies of the Olympics.

Von Tschammer und Osten himself appeared in *Nanga Parbat* at the beginning of the film. Wearing his military uniform, the Reich Sports Leader prefaced the film with a three-minute speech. Von Tschammer und Osten's foreword claimed that "the 1934 German Himalaya Expedition to Nanga Parbat has become a subject dear to the hearts of the German people."⁶⁹⁵ He situated the expedition within the history of exploration,

⁶⁹⁵ Hans von Tschammer und Osten's foreword was reprinted in full in: Julius Trumpp, "Nanga Parbat. Das Filmwerk vom deutschen Kampf im Himalaja," *Deutscher Bergsteiger- und Wanderverband, Mitteilungen des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen* 6 (March 1936):

noting that both the South and North Poles had been explored and that the last blank spaces on the maps of Africa and Asia had been filled in; the last unexplored places on earth were the mountains of the Himalaya, and the “struggle for the Himalayas is the ultimate expression of the alpine idea.”⁶⁹⁶ The Reich Sport Leader praised the values that were reified in mountaineers grappling with the elements:

[The struggle in the Himalaya] is the reification of man’s will to conquer the material world. Mere men fight the powerful Himalayan mountains with nothing more than their unbowed wills in an environment completely unsupportive of life. In the struggle against these high peaks, the most noble virtues of mankind must be brought to bear: submission to the military spirit of collective achievement, camaraderie, courage and selfless sacrifice towards the goal.⁶⁹⁷

It is these virtues – the military spirit of achievement, camaraderie, courage and selfless dedication – that Von Tschammer und Osten identifies as the heart of the film. He also claims that the film “will inspire our young men to fight anew.”⁶⁹⁸ The film acts as a fulcrum between past and future, creating continuity between the dead climbers of the 1934 expedition and those who will follow in their footsteps: “I am pleased that this film is able to show the greatness of this goal, a goal for which four of the best German mountaineers gave their lives, a goal their comrades are prepared to continue fighting for.”⁶⁹⁹

76-77. “...die Deutsche Himalaja-Expedition 1934 zum Nanga Parbat ist eine Herzensache des deutschen Volkes geworden.”

⁶⁹⁶ Trumpp, “Nanga Parbat” 76. “Kampf um den Himalaja ist die Krönung der alpinen Idee.”

⁶⁹⁷ Trumpp, “Nanga Parbat” 76-77. “[Der Kampf um den Himalaja] ist der verkörperte Wille des Menschen, die Materie zu besiegen. Den gewaltigen Himalajabergen, die schon jenseits aller Lebensvoraussetzungen stehen, hat der winzige Mensch nichts entgegenzusetzen als seinen unbeugsamen Willen. So kommen im Kampfe um die Hochgipfel die vornehmsten Mannestugenden zum Einsatz: Einordnung in den militärischen Geist der Gemeinschaftsleistung, Kameradschaft, Kampfesmut und selbstlose Hingabe an das Ziel.”

⁶⁹⁸ Trumpp, “Nanga Parbat” 77. “... wird ... die Jugend zu neuem Kampfe entzünden.”

⁶⁹⁹ Trumpp, “Nanga Parbat” 77. “Ich freue mich, daß es gelungen ist, mit diesem Film die hinreißende Größe des Ziels zu zeigen, für das vier der besten deutschen Bergsteiger fielen und für das ihre Kameraden weiterzukämpfen bereit sind.”

The political and cultural value of the film was also recognized by the Third Reich's film censors, which rated the film as "politically valuable, culturally valuable, and educational."⁷⁰⁰ The film was also granted a special license to be screened to youth audiences and on holidays. On the Sunday morning of 21 March 1936, at 11:00 am, five theaters in Munich held simultaneous special screenings of *Nanga Parbat* for the Hitler Youth.⁷⁰¹ At each screening, surviving expedition members were to provide an introductory lecture to the film that summarized "the spiritual driving force behind the struggle in the Himalayas in general and with Nanga Parbat in particular."⁷⁰² Paul Bauer also arranged a series of talking points so that each expedition member could present the same message in each theater. On the day before the lectures, the expedition members were supposed to meet with the district leadership of the Hitler Youth to agree on the details of the event. The screenings of 21 March 1936 indicate the willingness of mountaineering institutions, especially the *Deutsche Himalaja-Stiftung* (German Himalaya Foundation), to assist in the coordination of activities designed for propaganda and political indoctrination. And the film appears to have enjoyed a long stay in the theaters, as well as numerous special presentations for young people. Nearly a year after the film's premiere in Munich, the Hitler Youth continued to arrange special screenings for their members to instill the masculine values identified by the Reichssportführer: "in the coming Hitler Youth film showings this month, the film of the German Himalaya Expedition of 1934 will be screened. It is a film of wonderful images and a factual report

⁷⁰⁰ Trumpp 76. "Staatspolitisch wertvoll, kulturell wertvoll, volksbildend."

⁷⁰¹ The timing of these screenings were ostensibly timed to interfere with church attendance.

⁷⁰² Letter from Peter Aufschnaiter to Peter Müllritter, 16 March 1936. Central Archive of the German Alpenverein. Files of the DHS: 1937, Voranschläge. "... die geistigen Treibkräfte des Kampfes um den Himalaja überhaupt und um den Nanga Parbat im Besonderen."

on the daring of German men.”⁷⁰³ And where the Hitler Youth magazine *HJ* promised excitement and entertainment, Julius Trumpp urged parents to enable their children to fulfill their duty to see the film:

Since Germany’s youth is mandated to be inspired by the example of the mountaineer, both as a symbol of courageous daring and of serious fulfillment of duty, the youth must be given the opportunity to see this film, with all of its authentic images of wild nature that afford an innocent pleasure to the audience. This culture film is certainly suitable to point out what noble virtues the mountaineer must develop, despite all dangers; this prepares our youth for more serious tasks, tasks that our fatherland demands from hardened men. Due to the educational value of the film, these virtues can be presented in an exemplary manner to Germany’s youth, and for this reason, all school classes should also visit the theaters to see the film.⁷⁰⁴

The promotion of *Nanga Parbat* was not limited to young audiences; the local organizations of the German Office for Sports took significant measures to ensure its success among adults as well. In three separate issues of the *Mitteilungen des Fachamts Bergsteigen*, mountaineers were practically ordered into the theaters. Trumpp wrote that every sports organization in the country should see the film, “so that the accomplishments of mountaineers will be properly understood by everyone.”⁷⁰⁵ Pointing out that the Reichssportführer had supported the entire expedition from the beginning, it was taken

⁷⁰³ “Nanga Parbat,” *Die HJ* [Berlin] 23 January 1937. “In den Jugendfilmstunden der HJ wird in diesen Monaten der Film von der deutschen Himalajaexpedition 1934 gezeigt werden. Es ist ein Film wundervoller Aufnahmen und ein Tatsachenbericht vom Wagen deutscher Männer.”

⁷⁰⁴ Julius Trumpp, “Nanga Parbat. Das Filmwerk vom deutschen Kampf im Himalaja. Zu den Aufführungen im Reich.” Deutscher Bergsteiger- und Wanderverband, *Mitteilungen des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen*. Nr. 7 (April 1936): 90. “Weil Deutschlands Jugend die Pflicht obliegt, die Vorbilder der Bergsteiger als Zeichen kühnen Wagemutes und ernster Pflichterfüllung sich als Ansporn dienen zu lassen, ist auch der Jugend Gelegenheit zu geben, den Film zu schauen und aus den Bildern einer unverfälschten wilden Natur gleich einem unschuldigen Vergnügen Gewinn zu ziehen. Dieser Kulturfilm ist ja sicher geeignet, zu erkennen, welche hohe Tugenden allen Gefahren zum Trotz den Bersteiger erst ausmachen und gleicht einer Vorbereitung zu noch ernsteren Aufgaben, die das Vaterland von einem harten Geschlecht verlangt. Die erzieherischen Werte, die in dem Film stecken, können so der Jugend vortrefflich vermittelt und überall sollte der geschlossene Besuch der Schulklassen ermöglicht werden.”

⁷⁰⁵ Julius Trumpp, “Nanga Parbat. Das Filmwerk” 79. “... damit das Tun der Bergsteiger in allen Schichten verständnisvoll gewürdigt werde.”

for granted that “all associations within the Third Reich will direct their interest towards the screenings of the Nanga Parbat film.”⁷⁰⁶ Trumpp also advised all of the Alpenverein chapters in both Germany and Austria of their duty to advertise the film locally and provide support for screenings. According to Trumpp’s publications in the *Mitteilungen*, the German railway company, the Reichsbahn, had also been directed to provide all available support and space for the advertisement of *Nanga Parbat*. The leadership of the sports establishment in the Third Reich also exercised their influence directly in order to help advertise the film.⁷⁰⁷

A rave review of Nanga Parbat in the Alpenverein’s *Mitteilungen* reported that the film was a “milestone in the development of the mountain film.”⁷⁰⁸ Although mountaineers had often gone to the cinema only to be “almost inevitably disappointed,” *Nanga Parbat* was a masterpiece at every level, capturing the spirit of mountaineering as never before:

What the film has to say about inner values cannot be described; it must be felt and experienced. This film is the incontrovertible truth and makes not a single concession in that regard. Unlike other expedition films, *Nanga Parbat* does not bring back any images to our *Heimat* that are enshrouded with the kind of mysticism that we have rejected in *Demon of the Himalaya*, no exaggeration through special effects, which disturbed us in far too many of the so-called “mountain films.” The film cannot and does not want to show us the experiences

⁷⁰⁶ “Nanga-Parbat-Film und Reichsbundvereine.” Deutscher Bergsteiger- und Wanderverband, Mitteilungen des Fachamtes Bergsteigen im Deutschen Reichsbund für Leibesübungen. Nr. 8-9 (May-June 1936): 109-110. “... alle Reichsbundvereine den Aufführungen des Nanga-Parbat-Films ihr besonderes Interesse zuwenden.”

⁷⁰⁷ Julius Trumpp, “Nanga Parbat. Das Filmwerk vom deutschen Kampf im Himalaja. Zu den Aufführungen im Reich” 90.

⁷⁰⁸ W.R., “‘Nanga Parbat.’ Das Filmwerk der Deutschen Himalaja-Expedition 1934.” Mitteilungen des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins. Nr. 6. (June 1936): 151-152. “... Markstein in der Entwicklung des Bergfilms.”

of the individual, but rather the well-prepared collective struggle of a resolute fighting troop towards the highest goal.⁷⁰⁹

The reviewer's praise of *Nanga Parbat*, and his dismissal of Dyhrenfurth's *Demon of the Himalaya*, as well as the entire genre of the mountain film, highlights two distinctive features of the discourse surrounding *Nanga Parbat*. First, *Nanga Parbat*'s narrative style, free of ornamentation, leads the reviewer to assert that the film is a "truthful" account, thereby privileging it in the context of master narrative formation. By contrast, *Demon* and the mountain film genre squander their authority by using technical tricks or artificial plots, effectively concealing a greater truth that *Nanga Parbat*, according to this reviewer, is able to impart faithfully to the audience. Second, the reviewer accuses feature filmmakers of concentrating too much on the experience of the individual. Unlike *Nanga Parbat*, a testament to the team ethic of high-altitude mountaineering, feature films distort the master narrative of mountaineering into a selfish, sensationalist obsession with the emotional states of individuals. According to the master narrative under National Socialism, individuals are only important as members of the national community, the *Volkgemeinschaft*; in the context of mountaineering, individual mountaineers are only important as members of the community of the climbing rope, or the *Seilgemeinschaft*.

And it was no surprise that this particular review, published over six months after *Demon of the Himalaya* was successfully removed from theaters, mentioned *Demon* again by name. Due to the success of *Nanga Parbat*, another distribution company had picked up *Demon* and begun screening Dyhrenfurth's film again. Bauer and Trumpp

⁷⁰⁹ W.R. 152. "... fast stets enttäuscht ..." ... "Was [der Film] an inneren Werten schenkt, kann nicht geschildert, kann nur empfunden werden. Dieser Film ist von unbedingter Wahrheit, die in keiner Einzelheit ein Zugeständnis macht. Kein Bild ist in der *Heimat* nachgeholt, wie wir es von anderen Expeditionsfilmen kennen, keine Mystik ist darin verwoben, wie wir sie im "Dämon Himalaja" ablehnen, keine Übertreibung in technischen Schwierigkeiten geboten, wie sie uns in vielen, allzu vielen "Bergfilmen" stört. Er kann und will nicht das Bergerleben des einzelnen darstellen, er zeigt das wohl vorbereitete Gemeinschaftsringen einer entschlossenen Kämpferschar um ein höchstes Ziel.

were outraged, and they, along with *Nanga Parbat's* production company, Döring-Film-Werke, began working to have the film removed from theaters once again.

Döring-Film-Werke began the campaign by asking Trumpp to use his office as press official to publicize the differences between *Demon* and *Nanga Parbat*. The re-released version of *Demon* included the dedication to the Nanga Parbat climbers that had been edited out at the request of the Deutsche Bergwacht, and advertisements also appear to have dedicated the film to the memory of the dead heroes of Nanga Parbat. Döring was concerned that the theater-going public would be confused about which film was really about the 1934 expedition; this led the firm to approach some theater owners and demand that they publish explanations in the newspaper that would alleviate the confusion:

We had to tell the owner of the Capitol Lichtspiele theater, Mr. Karg, that he must publish a notice, at the latest by the day after tomorrow, declaring that the film “*Dämon der Himalaja*” has not the least thing to do with “*Nanga Parbat*,” and that only the latter deals with the German struggle to reach Nanga Parbat’s summit.⁷¹⁰

Döring did not limit their campaign to Trumpp and his Munich connections; they also notified the radio service and the Reichssportführer, asking them to publicize the difference between the two films.

For Trumpp, this approach – informing the public of the differences between the films – did not suffice. In a letter to the Reichskulturkammer, Trumpp demanded that “this product of Jewish swindlers, a film alien to the German people and the German nation,” be removed from Germany’s theaters.⁷¹¹ He referred the Reichskulturkammer to

⁷¹⁰ Letter from Döring-Film-Werke to Julius Trumpp, 25 March 1936. Central Archive of the German Alpenverein. “Wir haben dem Besitzer der Capitol Lichtspiele, Herrn Karg zusagen müssen, dass in der örtlichen Presse, bereits übermorgen, ein Hinweis erscheint der zum Ausdruck bringt, dass der “*Dämon des Himalaya*” mit dem “*Nanga Parbat*” nicht das Geringste zu tun hat und das nur der Letztere auf den deutschen Kampf um die Gipfelbesteigung Bezug nimmt.”

⁷¹¹ Letter from Julius Trumpp to the Reichsfilmstelle der Reichskulturkammer, 26 March 1936. Central Archive of the German Alpenverein. “... den volks- ja staatsfremd anzusehenden Film jüdischer Geschäftsmacher ...”

Trumpp and Bauer's earlier request of October 1935, and asked the authorities to issue an injunction against future screenings of *The Demon of the Himalaya*. There is no record of the Reichskulturkammer's decision, but it seems reasonable to assume that the success of earlier petitions was probably repeated, and that *Demon* was once again removed from theaters.

There are two possible reasons for the vehement reaction of Bauer, Trumpp and Buckel to Dyhrenfurth's film. First, *Demon* presented a direct threat to the master narrative that the backers of *Nanga Parbat* wished to present to the public. Just as the Alpenverein had heavily criticized Fanck's mountain films for misrepresenting mountaineers and mountaineering in their melodramatic plots, the institutions of mountaineering in the Third Reich – including the Alpenverein, the Deutsche Bergwacht, the German Himalaya Foundation, the Department of Mountaineering within the German Association for Sport, and the offices of the Reichssportführer – demolished *Demon of the Himalaya* for contradicting the official narrative of Nanga Parbat.

The second reason for the attack on Dyhrenfurth's film revolved around box-office receipts. Ticket revenues generated by *Nanga Parbat* were meant to support future Himalayan expeditions, which meant that these profits would be deposited in the bank accounts of the Deutsche Himalaja-Stiftung, an organization headed by Paul Bauer. Although exact figures are not available, it is reasonable to assume that the German Himalaya Foundation generated significant income from *Nanga Parbat*, since it was screened for almost two years throughout the Third Reich. In the official documents related to the clash between *Demon* and *Nanga Parbat*, however, there is no mention of the financial interests of Paul Bauer or the German Himalaya Foundation. The constant speeches and reviews surrounding the film *Nanga Parbat*, describing Germany's national obligation to climb Nanga Parbat, appears to have been meant to inspire audiences to

support future Himalayan expeditions both in terms of spiritual support and box-office purchases.⁷¹²

The conflict between *Demon* and *Nanga Parbat* illustrates the investment that mountaineering functionaries placed in the master narrative surrounding the 1934 Nanga Parbat expedition. From within the institutions affiliated with mountaineering, key figures such as Bauer, Buckel and Trumpp used the ideological weapons of National Socialism to protect their hegemonic grip on the master narrative of mountaineering. By falsely accusing Dyhrenfurth, an otherwise well-respected member of the mountaineering community, of being Jewish, the forces assembled behind *Nanga Parbat* revealed how the levers of the machinery of the National Socialist state could be manipulated to benefit private organizations and shape public discourse.

⁷¹² Julius Trumpp, “Nanga Parbat. Das Filmwerk vom deutschen Kampf im Himalaja” 79.

Conclusion

This dissertation has traced the evolution and modification of the Alpenverein's master narrative for mountaineering, from its early beginnings in the 1870s to the dark years of the Nazi Reich. We have seen how World War I radicalized the Alpenverein, transforming it from an organization dedicated to preserving the Alps as a natural treasure to be enjoyed by everyone, to an association of mountaineers who considered their sport as a component of Germany's national identity. During the Weimar Republic, the Alpenverein had lost some of its influence over representations of mountaineering to an array of competitors, including other alpine clubs, commercial tourism and the film industry, yet the Alpenverein was able to reassert its hegemony over alpine representations after the Nazis came to power in 1933.

As we have seen, the Alpenverein's master narrative changed radically after World War I, shifting from an inclusive organization to an increasingly exclusive club. The Alpenverein's initial membership policies offered everyone the chance to join up: men and women, Jewish Germans and Austrians, workers and aristocrats. Yet the experience of WW I impacted the Alpenverein in a profound way, and the traumas of WW I appear to have dampened enthusiasm for the club's universal orientation, turning it instead into an increasingly privileged, select group. The Alpenverein's master narrative reflected this change in its new emphasis on militant masculinity, national patriotism, notions of racial community, and reactionary politics. In the Third Reich, the Alpenverein's initial egalitarianism disappeared, subsumed into the vituperative ideology of the Nazi state.

In 1938, the Alpenverein greeted Nazi Germany's annexation of Austria with great zeal. After all, as the Alpenverein had long claimed, Germany and Austria belonged

together; in fact, according to the pages of its publications, the German-Austrian Alpenverein in many ways prefigured the ineluctable unification of Germany and Austria.

When the miracle of 13 March 1938 astonished the world, the Alpenverein was among those that felt most deeply connected with these great events; the very life force of our organization, beyond our narrow goals and tasks, was from the beginning oriented towards the German *Volksgemeinschaft* ... Most of the time, we can only strive for our ideals, but in this case, we have achieved them, the decades-long dream has become a reality – the German Reich extends from the Belt to the headwaters of the Etsch.⁷¹³

Shortly after Germany and Austria were united in 1938, a momentous mountaineering achievement provided more grist for the propaganda mill. The north face of the 1,800-meter Eiger, one of the most treacherous climbs in all of Europe, had claimed the lives of eight climbers between 1935 and 1937, catapulting the Eiger, much like Nanga Parbat, into the National Socialist spotlight. When Andreas Heckmair and Ludwig Vörg of Germany, combining forces with Fritz Kasperek and Heinrich Harrer of Austria, managed to navigate the Eiger's north face successfully, Nazi propagandists quickly exploited the symbolic value of the Eiger ascent. The whole adventure was broadcast live, interrupting symphony concerts to bring the latest news from the mountain.⁷¹⁴ The four mountaineers became instant celebrities; a national tour culminated in a visit with Adolf Hitler, to whom Harrer famously stated, "We climbed the Eiger

⁷¹³ MDÖAV (1938): 225. "Als das Wunder des 13. März 1938 die Welt in Staunen setzte, da war der Alpenverein unter jenen, die sich dem großen Geschehen zuinnerst verbunden fühlten; denn sein Lebensinhalt, über die engeren Ziele und Aufgabe hinaus, war von allem Anfang an die deutsche Volksgemeinschaft ... Ideale Ziele werden sonst meist nur angestrebt, in diesem Falle ist es erreicht, der jahrzehntelange Traum Wirklichkeit geworden; das Deutsche Reich reicht vom Belt bis an die Quellen der Etsch."

⁷¹⁴ Harald Höbusch, "Germany's 'Mountain of Destiny': *Nanga Parbat* and National Self-representation," The International Journal of the History of Sport 19.4 (December 2002): 137.

north face beyond the summit – until we reached our Führer.”⁷¹⁵ The symbolic importance attributed to the first ascent of the Eiger, which seemed to affirm the unstoppable force generated by Germany’s annexation of Austria, was produced not only by Goebbels’s propaganda machine, but also by the climbers themselves.

Nanga Parbat and the north face of the Eiger became national symbols during the Third Reich, and the Alpenverein’s master narrative fit the representations of these events like a glove. Placing the emphasis upon collective striving toward a common goal, a rugged masculinity that would not consider defeat, and a blind faith in the value of sacrifice for the nation, the Alpenverein’s master narrative became an instrument of propaganda within the Nazi state.

It was for these reasons that, in 2003, when Britain and New Zealand celebrated the fifty-year anniversary of the climbing of Mount Everest, there was scarcely a mention of Nanga Parbat in Germany. After all, 1953 had been a watershed year for mountaineering; the Austrian mountaineer Hermann Buhl became the first man to stand at the summit of Nanga Parbat, while Sir Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay became the first people to successfully climb Mount Everest. Even though Mount Everest was the highest mountain in the world, the successful climb of Nanga Parbat, Germany’s “mountain of fate,” had also been an impressive achievement. Yet the Alpenverein’s collaboration with the Nazis cast a pall over the memory of Nanga Parbat; the strident nationalism of Bechtold’s *Germans on Nanga Parbat* and the expedition documentary *Nanga Parbat* cemented the historical association between the Alpenverein and their Nazi masters in both word and image.

⁷¹⁵ Andreas Heckmaier, Ludwig Vörg, Fritz Kasparek and Heinrich Harrer, Um die Eiger-Nordwand (Munich: Eher, 1938) 87. “Wir haben die Eiger-Nordwand durchklettert über den Gipfel hinaus bis zu unserem Führer.”

A great deal of work still remains to be done on the history of mountaineering after World War II, particularly in the field of memory and memorialization. The German Alpenverein, through its publications and its museum in Munich, have, much to their credit, engaged difficult topics in the Alpenverein's past over the last decade. Special exhibits about the Donauland affair, anti-Semitism in the Alpenverein, the role of the Alpenverein in the Nazi state, and the denazification of the Alpenverein represent attempts to come to terms with the heavy freight of the club's past.

Another fertile field of future research lies in a comparative study of East and West German mountaineering. Initial research has suggested that, in East Germany, an entirely new narrative for mountaineering developed that valorized the Naturfreunde as an anti-fascist organization that resisted the Nazis. In June 1968, a thirteen-episode television broadcast entitled "Rote Bergsteiger" ("Red Mountaineers") presented the history of the socialist mountaineering organizations in Dresden in a way that suggested that "the majority of Saxony's mountaineers had actively resisted the National Socialists."⁷¹⁶ And in 1982, in an event commemorating the fiftieth anniversary of the socialist-sponsored 1932 Deutsche Arbeiter-Kaukasus-Expedition (the German Workers' Caucasus Expedition), 17,000 mountaineers, hikers and trail runners were on hand to

⁷¹⁶ Joachim Schindler, "Zur Entwicklung Dresdner Bergsteigerorganisationen," Kaukasus: Die Geschichte der Ersten Deutschen Arbeiter-Kaukasus-Expedition 1932. Münchner und Dresdner Bergsteiger in der Sowjetunion. Ursula Brunner, Michael Kühn and Georg Ledig, Eds. (Munich: Buchendorfer Verlag, 2002): 78-83. Here at 82. "Es wurde ein öffentliches Bild gezeichnet, als ob die Mehrheit der sächsischen Bergsteiger in der Zeit des Nationalsozialismus Widerstand geleistet hätte."

celebrate.⁷¹⁷ Meanwhile, in the Federal Republic of Germany, the world's first working-class international expedition was completely forgotten.⁷¹⁸

Since the reunification of East and West Germany in 1990, mountaineering has become a global phenomenon. Reflecting the tectonic shifts of power and wealth in the age of globalization, large expeditions are now sponsored by multinational corporations rather than by nations. The age of imperial mountaineering, with the British laying claim to Mount Everest and the Germans appropriating Nanga Parbat as their “mountain of fate,” is over. Today, expeditions are more likely to plant the flag of their corporate sponsors than of their country.

Yet the German Alpenverein seems to have returned to its nineteenth-century roots. In many ways, the German Alpenverein has gone back to its pre-Nazi master narrative, casting the Alps as an endangered landscape in need of protection. The Alpenverein has also continued its youth programs, seeking to introduce as many young people as possible to responsible ways to enjoy the alpine landscape. And with its enormous membership and sizeable financial clout, the Alpenverein has led the way in conservation and nature appreciation, ensuring that parks and landscapes retain their primitive beauty, balancing the demands of mass tourism with the need to preserve the

⁷¹⁷ Michael Kühn, “Die “1. Deutsche Arbeiter-Kaukasus-Expedition”: Zusammenspiel von Alpinismus, politischer Aktion und zeitgeschichtlichem Geschehen.” Kaukasus: Die Geschichte der Ersten Deutschen Arbeiter-Kaukasus-Expedition 1932. Münchner und Dresdner Bergsteiger in der Sowjetunion. Ursula Brunner, Michael Kühn and Georg Ledig, Eds. (Munich: Buchendorfer Verlag, 2002): 30-39. Here at 36-37.

⁷¹⁸ Kühn 31.

Alps. In this regard, the Alpenverein has in many ways come full circle, articulating and promoting the same values that it espoused at its formation in the late nineteenth century.

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