Three Mountains:
Nationalism and Mountaineering in the Past and Present - Public history in South Tyrol, Berchtesgaden, and Transylvania

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Abstract

Mountains have been revered, used, and exploited as national symbols by 20th century European regimes. As such, they became sites of nationalist exclusion, violence, and performance of power. Having been a scene of atrocities and injustice, mountains constitute powerful lieu de mémoire: as such, they once again become anchoring points of history, identity, and community. In this thesis, three mountains at contested sites of memory relating to nationalist regimes in the first half of the 20th century are examined. The research explores the local histories of the interplay between nationalism and mountaineering cultures. After revealing the historical background, the research examines the present state of these three mountain areas as memory spaces.

The research identifies factors in the ideological appeal of nationalism for mountaineering communities. Based on these factors, the paper examines the historiography of mountaineering and the nationalist usage of the mountain landscapes in the areas of the case studies. After considering the historical heritage of the sites, the research explores the existing memory landscape. It identifies the present or missing anchoring points of identity and self-definition relating to the alpine space. Finally, the paper contrasts the case studies, examines their similarities and differences, and places them in the broader context of remembering nationalism.

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Introduction

Mountains inspire awe in the modern man: their hard, rocky surfaces radiate an energy of hardness and greatness as they tower above us. Some may think they constitute natural borders: they carve out nations on the map, separating them from each other. At the same time, they create communities: venturing into the mountains is a dangerous task, best undertaken in a group, where individuals are ready to sacrifice themselves for the common good.

Mountains have become national symbols: as such, they were revered across the nationalist regimes in 20th century Europe. Mountaineering projects and associations gained support from nationalist actors in their representation of the community. The alpine space was carefully curated in the midst of debates, removing undesirable elements in the constitution of a purely national realm. Mountains were seen as a realm where one could return into the natural way of being, escaping the ills of rapid industrialization. At the same time, they became a flashpoint of nationalist struggle: associations fought over mountain lodges; clubs excluded members they deemed unsuitable to be part of the community. Mountaineering as a practice became aligned with military service.

Mountains came to be a site of violence, injustice and power plays. As such, they also became spaces of memory for those who suffered or perpetrated these events, and for the broader realm of national communities. In this thesis, I look at mountains as lieux de mémoire: as witnesses to the crimes of the 20th century, housing an opportunity for critical engagement with the past. Mountains constitute an anchoring point of identity: I examine how the self-identification of memory actors and their historical narrative is reflected in the mountain space.

In this thesis, I consider three case studies of mountainous areas of historical importance: South Tyrol and the Trentino, Berchtesgaden, and Transylvania. Via the examination of three mountains, I compare their histories of the nationalist struggle, and the contemporary state of their surroundings as spaces of memory.

Scope of the research

The structure of this thesis is centred around the three mountains heading each case study. The research is built in "concentrical circles" around the mountains: first, it is the mountains themselves that are examined, then, their immediate surroundings, and finally, the broader area of their location. I first consider the historical events of the locations, and then delve into the forms, narratives and controversies of commemorative markers in the alpine space.

While mountain ranges house a fascinating history, it is impossible in the scope of this thesis to deal with all aspects of mountain history and culture. Therefore, I restricted my research to governmental institutions, that fostered nationalistic policies in the alpine space, and organizations that used mountains for their self-definition: mountaineering and mountain sports associations. The examination of these communities allows me to consider their way of self-conceptualisation, their membership selection, and the debates that ensued among members of the group. Including state actors in the research allows the consideration of the broader picture of the nation. Furthermore, it also fosters the examination of the interconnectedness of the space and the actors and institutions sharing it.

Methodology

The aim of my thesis is to explore the alpine space as lieu de mémoire, and to examine initiatives that either reinforce or combat the nationalist narrative in the mountains. Besides the contextualisation of previously existing knowledge, I will study contemporary phenomena: I will describe the historiography and symbolic importance of the landscape and research its present status as lieu de mémoire.

Throughout my research, I visited the locations of interest and examined the presence and space of memory cultures. I employed various qualitative research practices to be able to effectively explore the subjective realm. My research findings are presented in a comparative structure: I contrast the usage of the alpine space and imagery in past and present nationalisms and compare the regional results. This comparison enables me to give a complete and relevant analysis of the relationship of nationalism to mountaineering cultures and develop a thesis that can be applied to the multitude of case studies, regardless of their historical and cultural differences.

Space, history, and institutional memory

The starting point of this research was the alpine landscape. I selected the three case studies and examined the present state of the mountain space in these territories. For each case study, a mountain was chosen that best represents the history of the examined area. The information was extracted from the history of these mountain: first ascents, cultural importance, mountain lodges and memory actors around the mountains guided my research. I identified the topics of interest regarding each case study: the institutions, markers, and actors of memory as well as the mountaineering or hiking associations that operate in the areas.

Focusing on mountain sports associations has proven to be helpful, as their relationship to history, financial status, connections to other institutions, and sources of funding revealed

nationalist structures of power. In applicable cases, I explored the progression of associations that exist in the present day: I examined their history as nationalist actors, and their present role as memory actors.

Self-definition and self-representation

Examining actors of nationalism and memory, I focused on their self-representation and self-definition. For this, I consulted archival material, such as press releases and photographs. These sources provide a valuable insight into the language and imagery of past mountaineering and enable the analysis of the relationship between alpinism and nationalism as it was perceived and defined by the actors themselves. Furthermore, it also provides information of the ideological background and self-conceptualisation of contemporary actors of memory.

As for the research of mountain sport associations' approach to nationalism among their ranks, their self-representation and self-definition is heavily considered in this research. Self-produced texts and imagery constituted the main source of information; however, secondary sources (content produced by outside actors) were also studied.

Field research

Throughout my research, I visited as many of the examined locations as possible to gather first-hand information in the institutions of memory as well as the actors of nationalism. The presentation of history in the local context served as a valuable source of information: I observed, how well-maintained the spaces were, how many funds were allocated to their preservation, and when and how they were renovated. These institutions or markers of memory can be considered the self-representations of nationalist actors or states, or they can show critical engagement with nationalist structures of power. The comparison of these findings gives ground for comparison of the state of memorialisation at the examined locations.

Besides the examination of institutional memory, I also gathered information by attending the annual Breakout hike of 2024 organised by the Hungarian Hazajáró Egylet. This event is perhaps the most controversial memorial hike in Central Europe. Taking part and observing the event gave me a chance to accurately assess its nationalist character as lieu de mémoire on the Hungarian and German far-right.

Broader context

Nationalism in smaller and specified groups cannot be studied without taking a glance at the state of the wider community. The development of mountaineering and hiking is inseparable from political decisions regarding sports, culture, and finances. At the same time, alpinist micro-communities can either choose to accept and amplify nationalist tendencies or reject them. My research was conducted with attention to the nationalism of the broader society, as I placed the nationalism among alpine associations in the wider picture.

Defining mountaineering

As the Britannica encyclopedia writes, "mountaineering [is] the sport of attaining, or attempting to attain, high points in mountainous regions, mainly for the pleasure of the climb"[1]. The contemporary definition of mountaineering therefore entails the action of climbing: that is, using a rope to surmount obstacles to reach the desired location (that is, if we exclude the concept of free solo – climbing without a rope – which is done alone, and is therefore not a useful concept for this thesis).

However, in the earlier history of mountaineering, there was not such a sharp distinction between different mountain sports (it could be debated whether such differentiation is useful today). Climbing, hiking, skiing and mountaineering were not necessarily separate: alpine associations housed enjoyers of all these sports. Therefore, in this thesis, I refer to mountaineering as a combination of hiking, climbing, skiing, and in some cases, expeditions. I use the concepts of "mountaineer" and "alpinist" interchangeably. The reason for this is that this thesis examines the group identity of mountaineering associations: for such a survey, a skier belonging to an alpine association, sharing a common bond of culture with its members, and having an emotional-ideological connection to the alpine landscape shall be regarded as a mountaineer.

A brief history of mountaineering

It is difficult to give a complete yet short account of the history of mountaineering. From what we know, humans have always gone into the mountains, however, the way of thinking about

[1] Carol D. Kiesinger and George Alan Smith, "Mountaineering," *Encyclopedia Britannica*, March 27, 2024. https://www.britannica.com/sports/mountaineering.

going into the mountains went under significant changes with the evolution of cultures, communities and nations.

On 19 September 1991, two German hikers discovered a body in the Ötztal Alps, at the border of Austria and Italy. The body was in such good condition that they initially believed it to be a casualty of a recent accident. The following day, mountain rescuers tried to recover the body, but the efforts were halted due to bad weather: it was only his pickaxe that they could free from the ice. Reinhold Messner, a renowned mountaineer who was alerted with other South Tyrolean mountaineers examined the pickaxe. He was the first to realise that the body was several thousand years old.

"Ötzi", the mummy frozen in ice turned out to be around 5,000 years old. Since his body was largely preserved by the ice of the Ötztal glacier, analysis on his corpse provided researchers with a great amount of information. However, it is not known, why he went into the mountains. Theories suggest that he fled into the mountains: this is supported by the evidence that he died a violent death. However, it is not certainly known that he was being chased: he might have been transgressing in the mountains. It is not known where he was heading or why: what is known is that if a human climbs to 3,210 meters (where Ötzi ventured 5,000 years ago) they are, depending on the circumstances, considered a mountaineer.

Looking for the origin of mountaineering as a chosen activity, it is useful to examine the tradition of ascending mountains in search of spiritual experiences. Although Petrarch asserts that he climbed Mount Ventoux not in search of spiritual enlightenment, but because he wanted to see the mountaintop, he later recounts his climb as an experience of inward journey. His desire for an aesthetic experience is in conflict with his religious-humanist ethics. In the end, he concludes that human contemplation is much higher in worth than any mountain. Some scholars doubt he actually climbed Mount Ventoux. Asher[2] argues that, like other written events

[2] Lyell Asher, "Petrarch at the Peak of Fame". PMLA" 108 (1993): 1050–1063.

in Petrarch's life, the climb may have never happened, but this does not take away the importance of the climber's account: for Dante may not have been on the mountain himself, but spiritually, by the examination of the turnings of his soul, he "became the mountain".

Popular consensus in alpinist circles is that mountaineering as a sport – an achievement measured in numbers and followed by spectators – began with the ascent of Mont Blanc in 1786. It was indeed this event that drew adventurers into the mountains in the following centuries. The first ascent of a female climber soon followed in 1808, and mountaineering, aided by modern inventions, tools and infrastructure, started to grow as a popular sport. Mountaineering associations started to form in the second half of the 19th century – the first of them being the British Alpine Club in 1857. These associations transformed climbing into a communal activity. The growing popularity and community-creating status of alpinism is where the timespan of this thesis begins.

Theoretical background

Mountains as national symbols

Mountains as the symbol of a nation are present all around in the world: Mount Fuji is a well-known representation of the nation of Japan, Slovenia features the Triglav in its coat of arms, while in Slovakia, the image of the Kriváň won itself a place on the country's euro coins in a referendum. In cases like these, the mountain represents much more than itself: it is an image that stands for strength, identity and nationhood.

Imagined Communities

Benedikt Anderson[3] describes nations as imagined communities, where not all members can have a real-life relationship to each other, but everyone feels connected to other members in terms of identity. Gellner[4] defines nationalism as an interaction of culture and power and describes it as a theory that maintains that "similarity of culture is the basic social bond"[5]. With that, they both assert that the nation is not a natural, but rather a cultural phenomenon. Therefore, nationality is something that has to be "learnt" and "taught", and nations employ symbolism to achieve cultural reproduction.

Nationhood is "passed on" via symbols: anthems, flags, and the like. Mountains can function as such: they can represent a nation for members and non-members alike. These symbols can be interactive: by holding the flag or singing the anthem, one is being invited to perform nationhood[6]. Mountaineering can also work as an interactive performance of the nation: by climbing, being photographed with or residing at a significant mountain, one can perform their belonging to the nation. At the same time, national symbols also have a divisive effect: one can

[3] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, England: Verso Books, 2016).
[4] Ernest Gellner, *Nationalism* (London, England: Phoenix, 1998).
[5] Gellner, *Nationalism*, 3.
[6] Pal Kolstø, "National Symbols as Signs of Unity and Division," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 29, no. 4 (2006): 676–701.

voluntarily stay away from participating in the performance of nationhood, to signify their dissatisfaction with national politics. Alternatively, one can be barred from participating in the performance for being perceived as a non-member.

Mountains as "natural borders"

Like nations, borders are also constructed. Mountains are sometimes referred to as "natural borders", however, as Renes[7] points out that, natural phenomena can constitute both an obstacle and a road at the same time. Rivers and seas are also called natural borders, while they have also been used as means of transportation. Similarly, mountain ranges can also be passed through. When 5000 years ago Ötzi moved through the Ötztal Alps, he would have never thought that he would become the centre of an international dispute: his body was found a mere 30 meters into Italy, on the border of Austria. However, as his finders first alerted Austrian mountain rescuers, his body was initially transferred to Innsbruck for research. As it was later found, his body lay on the Italian side, and due to the Italian laws on archaeological findings, he constitutes the property of the Italian state. Therefore, he is now exhibited in Bozen/Bolzano, on Italian territory. His case is a good illustration on how mountain ranges as natural borders are constructed.

At the same time, imaginary borders become real in the mountains: with the changing borders of the 20th century, mountaineering associations were barred from visiting the mountains where they previously built refuges or helped develop the infrastructure to facilitate their sports activities. Even recently, until the Schengen Agreement took effect in 1995 (or even later in Central Eastern Europe), hikers could get into trouble for crossing borders in mountain ranges. Mountains naturally transcend constructed borders, but at the same time, imaginary borders can become real for those who wander into these territories.

[7] Hans Renes, *Landscape, Heritage and National Identity in Modern Europe*, 1st ed. (Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, 2023).

Land as a national symbol: naturalising nationalism

Countries often depict themselves by referring to their landscapes. Land, that is not being observed and interpreted by humans is not political. However, as landscapes are being referred to in the nationalist discourse, they become political. As Renes[8] writes, one tends to fall into the trap of thinking that landscapes cannot be political, therefore, discussions on landscape are apolitical. However, this is exactly the political strategy that nationalism uses to exploit landscapes: discussions on land are political in their core, however, they are more successful if they pretend not to be. If one believes landscapes to be natural, one may also believe that the ideology tied to it – in this case, nationalism – is also natural.

Not every landscape is fit to be a national symbol. The selection process varies from nation to nation. "Natural" landscapes (those thought relatively untouched by civilisation and not constructed by humans) are chosen when the nation wants to highlight its connection to primeval times. As Renes[9] points out, ethnically oriented nationalism often favours mountains for the difficult access and roughness of the terrain, that can keep non-members from entering the land.

Mountains had most likely been anchors of identity in pre-national times. Tribal communities settled at the foot of mountains for water and mining resources. For tribal indigenous communities around the world, mountains continue to function as important markers of identity and communal unity. The native Ayllu live on their sacred mountain Mount Kaata in Bolivia[10]. They think of their mountain as a human-like entity: they seek to nurture it with various offerings, and the mountain provides them with livestock and crops in return. The Ayluu's identification with their sacred mountain had been so strong that, despite the century-long

[8] Renes, *Landscape, Heritage and National Identity in Modern Europe,* 84.
[9] Renes, *Landscape, Heritage and National Identity in Modern Europe,* 22.
[10] Edwin Bernbaum, "Sacred Mountains: Sources of Indigenous Revival and Sustenance," in *Indigeneity and the Sacred: Indigenous Revival and the Conservation of Sacred Natural Sites in the Americas*, ed. Fausto Sarmiento And Hitchner (Bergbahn Books, 2017), 92–104.

efforts of Spanish colonisers and Bolivian authorities to divide the indigenous land, the Ayluu stayed on their ancestral mountain, and continued to practice the related traditions. The Maori tribes of New Zealand view the mountains as their ancestors and introduce themselves to other tribes by describing their mountain[11].

In Western tradition, the reverence of mountains as anchoring points of identity and self-definition came about later in time. Although some early pioneers pointed out the majesty of the alpine peaks in pre-Romantic times, the great breakthrough of the mountain aesthetic was brought about by Romanticism. Romanticism countered the rationality of Enlightenment in the process that Gellner calls "Roots Against Reason"[12]. While the Enlightenment philosophy argues for reason and human universalism, Romanticism maintained feelings and cultural specificity. The aestheticization of mountains stems from the same process: the usefulness of the landscape took a second seat behind the alpine sublime.

Right-wing nationalism in the mountains: what is the appeal?

Modernism vs. anti-modernism

Both Anderson and Gellner argue that the emergence and spread of the nationalist ideology developed due to modernization and the conditions of the industrializing world. Anderson cites the spread of the novel and the newspaper and the resulting changes in timeline-perception and language use as defining factors[13]. Gellner writes that the reason for nationalism to prevail despite Marx's predictions is the different degrees of industrialization in national communities[14]. As it was briefly explored before, the popularisation of the mountain aesthetic and mountaineering were also made possible in part by the modernisation of tools and

[11] Bernbaum, Sacred Mountains, 95.
[12] Gellner, *Nationalism,* 67-71.
[13] Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, 22-46.
[14] Gellner, *Nationalism*, 31-36.

infrastructure: therefore, the two concepts developed from the same roots. Both nationalism and mountaineering culture reflect heavily on modernisation – therefore, the ideologies spawning from these concepts can and do interact with each other.

As Peukert argues[15], the conservative revolution in Germany was made possible by the crisis of modernity in the Weimar Republic. The swift modernisation process in all aspects of life created harsh counter-reactions, that sprang from the desire to revert back to the old, familiar ways. At the same time, the following National Socialist regime utilised elements of modernity to forge a new national identity. This twofold attitude to modernisation can also be found in alpinist circles, past and contemporary alike.

Mountaineering with its use of the newest technologies and its exploitation of the man vs. nature trope can be seen as the pinnacle of modernisation. At the same time, the Alps are often described as a refuge from the crushing industrialization, and as a way of returning to an idyllic pre-modern past. The two-faceted nature of the relationship between alpinism and modernisation has been a source of frequent debate among mountaineers. While some advocate for the increasing accessibility of the alpine landscape, others look at the mountains as a refuge from the masses. The latter attitude is often displayed in nationalist circles as an argument for excluding others from the mountains.

Territoriality

As Anderson writes, before the emergence of nation-states as the basic units of government, borders were loosely defined and guarded, and ethnicity was not taken into consideration in defining them. As Gellner argues, the fragile peace treaties at the end of World War I were the first that drew borders based on ethnic lines. Aside from the problems raised by the unrealistic idea of ethnic homogeneity corresponding to territories, this practice comes with its own issues

[15] Detlev Peukert, *The Weimar Republic: The Crisis of Classical Modernity*, (Hill and Wang, 1991) 277-278

in the mountains: due to its geographical fragmentation, ethnicities are often more diverse in the Alpine valleys.

"Conquering the mountain" is an expression that is still widely used as a metaphor for climbing. In the early phase of modern mountaineering, climbing was often framed as a conquest, similarly to other explorer's achievements of the time. As Kirchner notes, visiting other continents to climb mountains in the early 20th century is an exclusively European practice[16]: mountaineering in this sense can be regarded as a mean of asserting colonial power.

Focusing on European peaks, having presence on the mountain – climbers or infrastructure, such as mountain refuges – can play a part in the nationalist struggle for territory, as it has been the case in disputed alpine areas.

Physical culture: strength, community, militarisation

Mountaineering as a sport is not only useful to assert control over a territory: several nationalist authors argued for mountain sports to be included in military training. The White War waged on the peaks of South Tyrol during WWI made it clear that cavalry attacks on open fields were a thing of the past. As nationalist mountain enthusiasts argued, it was time to prepare troops for alpine warfare: the early 20th century saw several books and articles arguing for mountain training for soldiers.

It is not only the practicalities, but the "spirit" of mountaineering that also attracted nationalist attention. Although rock climbing in the early 20th century was already a practice reserved for the privileged few, expeditions required the participation of large groups. The time spent away from civilisation in the harsh alpine terrain was often said to forge an unusual bond between the members of the team. Mountaineering was seen as beneficial for this reason: it helped create real community from the members of the imagined community.

[16]Walter Kirchner, „Mind, Mountain, and History" in *History of Ideas*, (Oct., 1950), 437-438.

Inclusion and Exclusion

Since mountaineering, especially in the early 20th century required teamwork and infrastructure, decisions on who is allowed to participate were crucial. Those being barred from associations found it harder to find mates and equipment and were in some cases unable to use the mountain refuges. Therefore, being banned from associations practically meant being banned from the alpine space.

Right-wing nationalists in mountain sport associations used their platform to exclude groups they perceived as non-members, or not worthy members of the national community. Alpine associations traditionally favoured male participants: the first mountaineering club, the British Alpine Club explicitly banned women from being members when it was created in 1857 and would not allow women to be members for another century. Discussions on banning women were also present in the German-Austrian Alpenverein. In Germany and especially Austria, a wide-scale agitation against Jews in the Alpenverein started as early as in the '20s, and ultimately resulted in the banning of Jews even before Hitler took power. Therefore, mountaineers, motivated by the antisemitic völkisch ideology, took independent steps to keep the national alpine territory clean from non-members of the nation.

Remembering nationalism in/with the mountains

Mountains have been the witnesses, symbols, and participants of what Gellner calls the "murderous virulence of nationalism" in the 20th century. Nora defines "lieux de mémoire" as places, where a sense of historical continuity persists[17]. Mountains as the designated spaces of nationalist struggle fulfil this role in several ways. Mountains are spaces of the continued history of older mountaineering associations that can either choose to confront, work through, and display their histories, or ignore it altogether. They are also spaces of remembrance of

[17] Pierre Nora, "Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire," in *Special Issue: Memory and Counter-Memory* (Spring, 1989), 7–24.

nationalist regimes, as tools of propaganda that were used to fashion the image of the nation. And finally, they are spaces of memory for newly constructed communities that seek to create (or re-create) themselves by going back to the perceived root of their nation: the mountain landscape.

Established communities can choose to create institutions of memory and display a narrative that corresponds to their self-image. The narrative may be a critical approach to the history of the community, or it can be a reinforcement of the community's positive self-image. Alternatively, communities in transit, or at the stage of establishment may choose to engage in practices that create a bond between the members. In this thesis, I will examine these three ways of creating public history.

Chapter outline: the case studies

While mountains are used as national symbols all over the world and in different periods of time, I chose to limit my research to Europe, and to the early 20th century to the present time. I selected three case studies that can be studied separately, but at the same time, they are interconnected on some level: either via linguistic, cultural, personal or historical ties. Each chapter will be divided into two parts: first, I will examine the history of the interconnections between nationalism and the mountain landscape in the said region. Then, I will explore the institutions and practices of memory that either reflect on or draw from this heritage.

Case study 1: South Tyrol, Trentino and the Ortler

The first analytical chapter will explore the case of South Tyrol and the Trentino as multicultural, disputed alpine territories. South Tyrol had been the scene of nationalist agitation in the mountain sports scene as early as the end of the 19th century. It was also the scene of the first major alpine military operation in Europe during World War I. Here, the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, and territoriality in the Alps created a "shadow war" between Italian and Austrian alpine associations. Therefore, the South Tyrolean Alps offer much to remember. The area that once again evolved into a popular destination for alpinists, presents contesting narratives and different approaches to processing historical guilt and trauma leaves us with a rich pattern of public history in the Alpine landscape.

South Tyrol had been the scene of nationalist tensions since the late 19th century, and mountaineering provided a stage for the manifestation of nationalist sentiments. The Societá degli Alpinisti Tridentini (SAT) was founded in Trentino to provide a space for Italian-speaking mountaineers to explore their passion for the Alps while also affirming their belonging to the Italian nation. The Alps became a physical battlefield in World War I with previously unseen use of the mountain space as well as the alternation of the alpine landscape for war purposes.

The highest trenches were built on the Ortler – the highest point of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy – at 3,850 meters.

The loss of South Tyrol to Italy was a bitter defeat not only for the monarchy, but also for the German and Austrian climbers, who lost easy access to their beloved peaks. Throughout the years of the fragile interwar peace, the nationalist struggle for territory was transferred into the realm of alpinism: the German and Austrian Alpine Association fostered the flow of nationalist tourism in South Tyrol, and the SAT took measures to resist this movement. A "shadow war" ensued between the two associations, concentrated into the alpine space. In this chapter, I will describe the involvement of mountaineering associations in the nationalist struggle for South Tyrol and the Trentino. I will also examine the present approach to the memory culture of the formerly contested territories relating to mountains and mountaineering culture.

Case study 2: Berchtesgaden and the Watzmann

Hitler had been a frequent visitor in Berchtesgaden from the early days of the NSDAP and acquired a permanent residence just outside of town in 1928. After his rise to power, the so-called Berghof became a propaganda tool for the Nazi party, a site of pilgrimage for its followers, and a controversial construction project for the locals. All this happened under the backdrop of the illustrious Watzmann, the highest peak in the region, that had been a frequent object of artistic admiration ever since the Romantic era.

Berchtesgaden as Hitler's residence and an imagined German heartland for the Nazi regime is perhaps the most famous example of the utilisation of Alpine imagery in nationalist propaganda. Examining the history of the German-Austrian Alpenverein gives an insight into the multi-faceted approach to modernisation in the alpinist community. The debate on modernisation also allows the researcher to consider the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion based on both the relationship to modernity as well as the enforcement of national unity in the mountains.

Berchtesgaden and the surrounding area host multiple interesting initiatives of memory institutions or alternative commemorations that can be examined.

Case study 3: Transylvania and the Varful Pietrosul/Nagy-Pietrosz

Transylvania has often been described as the heartland of Hungarian identity. The mountainous landscape is evoked by nationalist actors in reference to the pain over the loss of the territory, and the longing for the lost homeland. The handling (or rather, the complete eradication) of minorities in the Hungarian narration of Transylvania also sheds light on the inclusion and exclusion into the national community via the mountain landscape.

During the years of the brief return of Northern Transylvania to Hungarian administration between 1940 and 1945, plans were made for the organization of the 1948 Winter Olympics in Borsafüred, at the foot of the Nagy-Pietrosz. At this point, the mountain was the highest peak of Hungary. To honour Governor Horthy, who was perceived as a "national saviour", the mountain was renamed Horthy-csúcs (Horthy-peak).

Today, the plans for the Olympics and the controversies regarding their execution are largely forgotten outside of a small history- and mountain sport-enthusiast community. However, in the nationalist imagination, Transylvania takes a prominent role with its mountainous landscape. Hungarians hiking in the Carpathians can be presented as a reclamation of the lost territories, and Transylvanian Hungarian mountaineers can define themselves in terms of belonging to the greater Hungarian nation. Hungarian national identity and the struggle to "keep Transylvania Hungarian" became a key question in Transylvanian mountaineering.

In this chapter, I will examine the use of the Carpathians in Hungarian revisionist nationalism, focusing on the Nagy-Pietrosz, in the '40s and today. Furthermore, I will explore the role of the contemporary Hazajáró Egylet, a controversial hiking association, as an actor of memory.

CASE STUDY I: The Ortler, South Tyrol and Trentino

Introduction

In this chapter, I will examine how the nationalist struggle for South Tyrol and the Trentino unfolded in the Tyrolean Alps. Italian and German alpine associations both joined their respective political sides in the effort to assert their sovereignty and culture over the mountains of the region. In this chapter, I will mainly focus on SAT, the Tridentine Italian association, while I will explore the history and nationalistic affiliations of the German-Austrian Alpine Association in the next chapter.

After discussing the foundation of SAT, I will explore the significance of a prominent Tyrolean mountain, the Ortler, in the culture of German-speaking Tiroleans as well as World War I. Drawing from the importance of mountaineering culture, I will explore the direct struggle of the Italian and German mountaineering associations regarding the usage of the mountain space. Finally, I will explore the present memory landscape of the region relating to mountaineering, war narratives, and nationalism.

Geographical boundaries

First, I must define the boundaries of the territory considered in this chapter. Instead of focusing only on South Tyrol with its spectacular history of ethnic struggle and displacement, I chose to include the Trentino as the "other side of the same coin", because the nationalisation of mountaineering was prevalent in both provinces. Historically, the two provinces constituted one administrative unit (Tyrol in the Habsburg Empire). The explicit separation of the two regions – first as Deutschtirol and Welschtirol – came about as a result of the nationalist struggle for the land[18]. While South Tyrol became an anchoring point of the nationalist rhetoric of the German-Austrian Alpenverein, the Trentino was the cradle of Italian nationalist-irredentist alpinism.

[18] John W. Cole and Eric Robert Wolf, *The Hidden Frontier: Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000). 17.

Steininger[19] gives a detailed account of the repression that the German inhabitants of South Tyrol had to face after the fascist takeover. The anti-German measures culminated in a repatriation deal with Nazi Germany that allowed South Tyrolean Germans to migrate to and settle in Germany. This policy was hailed as the best solution to the long-standing problem by both governments. However, the displacement of German inhabitants was preceded by a systematic crackdown on their rights: place names were Italianized, the use of German language was banned in state institutions, and many German associations (among others, the South Tyrolean Alpenverein) were disbanded. These policies heavily affected mountaineering culture: Alpine landmarks were renamed and thus "reclaimed", and mountain huts were confiscated from German to Italian ownership. In this tense atmosphere, the mountaineering culture remained an important refuge for the German South Tyroleans, for in the mountains, it was impossible for the fascist state apparatus to closely monitor their activities.

While South Tyrol was the initial scene of the nationalisation of the Alpenverein in its struggle to retain the "Germanness" of the lost territory, Trentino had been the powerhouse of the Italian nationalist mountaineering culture in the earlier decades. To get a full picture of the nationalist clashes in alpinism, both provinces need to be examined.

The founding of SAT

The Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini (SAT) was founded by Tridentine alpinists in 1872, during a time that was ripen with Italian nationalism. The original aim of SAT was to spread knowledge of the "homeland", to protect it from a foreign invasion, and to "reunite" Italy[20]. These aims were often described in territorial language, by referring to mountaineering as a "conquest" for the Alpine peaks.

[19] Rolf Steininger, *South Tyrol: A Minority Conflict of the Twentieth Century* (London, England: Routledge, 2017).

[20] Romano Cirolini and Ezio Mosna, *La S.A.T. Cento Anni 1872-1972* (SAT - Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini, 1973).

SAT was first dissolved in 1876 by the Austrian authorities over irredentist texts in a yearbook, however, the next year, it was re-founded. According to a book published by SAT[21], in 1878, the association tried to establish contact with the Alpenverein, but their advances were rejected. By the end of the 19th century, the SAT became a powerhouse of the irredentist movement in the Trentino: the association donated money for the erection of the Dante monument in Trento's city centre (an Italian nationalist symbol), and cooperated with the Alpini, the Italian army's mountain infantry, to found the Trentino battalion among its ranks[22].

The militarisation of mountains: Ortler and World War I

Until South Tyrol's secession from Austria, the Ortler was the highest peak of the Habsburg Empire. The "notable firsts" here were all achieved by German climbers: the first ascent was completed by Josef Pichler, a chamois hunter, and his companions on the command of Erzherzog Johann in 1804. The difficult north face of the mountain was also first climbed by a duo of German alpinists in 1931. Its first hut, the Payerhütte was built in 1875 by the Section Prag (Prague) of the DuÖAV, and was named after Julius von Payer, an accomplished Austrian polar explorer. After the secession of the province, it was transferred to the ownership of CAI. In 1999, its ownership was once again transferred to the South Tyrolean Alpenverein, but it was managed by the Milan section of the CAI until 2010. The website of the hut says that it is run by a German family for the past 30 years[23].

As Keller writes[24], the way of thinking of the Alps was significantly influenced by the events of World War I in the Alps. In the German alpinist milieu, the monumental landscape as a background to armed struggle symbolized German greatness and strength. The specialties of mountain warfare became the pinnacle of the warrior-ethos. The terrain made mass army

[21] Cirolini and Mosna, *La S.A.T. Cento Anni 1872-1972,* 34.
[22] Cirolini and Mosna, *La S.A.T. Cento Anni 1872-1972,* 46.
[23] "Julius Payer Hütte," *Payerhuette.com*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.payerhuette.com/de/.
[24] Tait Keller, *Apostles of the Alps: Mountaineering and Nation Building in Germany and Austria, 1860-1939* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2016). 89-118.

movements impossible, therefore, the troops stationed in the Alps were much smaller in number. As a result, the social bonds between the soldiers were stronger, and the war experience was more personal.

The highest trenches lay at 3,500 m, at the prominent Ortler mountain. In this very special terrain, the resources offered by alpine associations were utilized on both sides: mountain guides or members of the associations were conscripted into the alpine troops to guide the soldiers in the unfamiliar setting. The German-Austrian Alpenverein redefined itself as a "Schutzverein" in the war years: mountaineering officially became a tool of military mobilization.

The "White War" (Guerra Bianca in Italian, Gebirgskrieg in German, Fehér Háború in Hungarian) is described as one of the most dreadful episodes of World War I. As Keller points out, in the alpine terrain, the interaction between man and nature during the conflict was more intense than on other frontlines. Besides fighting the enemy, soldiers had to combat the harsh circumstances and the dangerous weather and other natural phenomena. Combatants also tried to turn these peculiar features of the environment in their own favour: they often tried to trigger avalanches or landslides to bury their enemy. With that, the mountain itself became a participant in the nationalist struggle.

Avalanches had a particularly devastating effects on the combatants. On 13 December 1916, in an event known as "White Friday" (although 13 December 1916 was actually a Wednesday) a single avalanche killed 270 Austro-Hungarian soldiers in the Marmolada region[25]. In the following days, several other avalanches were triggered, and took the lives of both Austro-Hungarian and Italian combatants. The days marked as "White Friday" and "Black Thursday" accounted for several thousands of dead and large material losses over the course of two days[26].

[25] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps*, 114.

[26] David W. Dunlap, "The Awful Beauty of the 'White War,'" *The New York Times* (The New York Times, September 20, 2017), accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/20/insider/the-awful-beauty-of-the-white-war.html.

The soldiers who perished in the avalanches were remembered as heroes, just like those, who died in armed fighting: a form of death formerly reserved to mountaineers became a hero's death.

After the end of the war, the mountain landscape of South Tyrol became a memento to the struggle that was waged over the peaks: for the Italians, it was a joyful symbol of victory, and for the Germans, it was a solemn reminder of grief and loss. The ridges were readily made memorials for those who perished among them: as Keller writes, "when the former soldier looked to the peaks, he still saw Austrians and Italians fighting"[27]. The White War was a divisive momentum of alpinism: it redefined the purpose of mountaineering from a tool for personal enrichment into a way of mobilisation for national goals. It also turned mountains into lieux de mémoire: the peaks became an anchoring point of war memories for the generation that fought among them.

The Bozner Bergsteigerlied

After the war, the Ortler continued to occupy a central place in nationalist imagination. The peak is referred to as "König Ortler" in the Bozner Bergsteigerlied, the "unofficial anthem" of South Tyrol. While the Bozner Bergsteigerlied still plays an important role in the German South Tyrolean identity, in the recent years, there were frequent discussions about the nationalist origins of the piece.

The author of the song, Karl Felderer went from a patriotic German South Tyrolean into an ardent Nazi supporter. His biography is a good illustration of the progression of the South Tyrolean alpinist society. Felderer was born in the small community of Margreid in the province of Bozen. He joined the Alpenverein in 1919 at the age of 24 and lived through the fascist takeover. In 1923, the Alpenverein along with other German associations was banned. As the

[27] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 117.

journal of the modern South Tyrolean Alpenverein writes[28], at this point, mountaineering was an important refuge for the German inhabitants of South Tyrol: in the mountains, they were largely unobserved and free to practice their culture and language. Singing while hiking became a new tool to transmit and signal national pride. Singing was important for the social cohesion of the alpinists, and it also helped them synchronize their steps on the mountain. It was in this atmosphere that the Bozner Bergsteigerlied was born in 1926. The lyrics does not mention South Tyrol directly, but it makes the location explicit by referring to the Alpine features, such as the Ortler mountain in the province of Bozen. The direct mention of South Tyrol was omitted to escape fascist censorship.

The article published by the Alpenverein does not mention the long-known Nazi sympathies of Felderer. In 1938, he published a poem greeting the Anschluss[29], comparing it to the arrival of spring after a long winter. In another poem attributed to Felderer, he expresses sympathy towards the migration policy of the Nazis concerning South Tyrolean Germans. However, Felderer himself continued to reside in Bozen/Bolzano until his death and was honored by the South Tyrolean Alpenverein as a long-time member and enthusiastic alpinist.

The "shadow war" of mountaineering associations: inclusion and exclusion, and territoriality in the Alps

The conflict between the SAT and the Alpenverein extended to multiple aspects of alpinism. The two associations clashed over place names, hut constructions, and the accreditation of mountain guides. Both communities were aiming to assert dominance over the alpine territory by making it difficult for the members of the other group to establish their presence in the mountains.

[28]Manuel Maringgele and Ivan Stecher, „Wohl ist die Welt so groß und weit: Das Bozner Bergsteigerlied" in *Berge Erleben: Das Magazin des Alpenvereins Südtirol* (2020). 34-35.
[29] Brigitte Foppa, "Wohl ist die Welt so groß und weit," *SALTO*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://salto.bz/de/article/05102013/wohl-ist-die-welt-so-gross-und-weit.

Before the war, the South Tyrolean chapters belonged seamlessly to the larger German-Austrian Alpenverein, and thus, they fostered a sense of belonging to the German-speaking nations. The Alpenverein at this point was supportive of the modernisation of alpine infrastructure. They were seeking to make the Alps more accessible for the masses: initially, this meant the construction of mountain huts for the safety and comfort of climbers.

In at least two instances, SAT and Alpenverein huts were built next to each other, resulting in bitter debates between the two associations[30] about property rights and national ties to the land. Essentially, it was via these constructions that the question was raised by the associations: which nation has more rights to be present and leave a mark in the Alpine landscape?

The Tosa and Bremer-Haus mountain refuges were built next to each other in the Brenta Dolomites in 1881 and 1911. The Tosa hut was the SAT's first high altitude refuge. It was an important project for the association, since it made longer climbs in the area possible, and at the same time, it showed that SAT possesses the necessary skills and power to construct a building at such a high altitude. After its completion, it had a reputation for being a hostile environment towards German and Austrian climbers. Therefore, the Alpenverein also needed to secure the safe and comfortable passage of German-speaking alpinists in the Brenta Dolomites: the Bremer-Haus was commissioned by the Bremen section of the Alpenverein and was planned to be a large and luxurious lodge for German climbers. According to an account published by SAT, the Italians had plans to expand the small and rustic Tosa hut – a plan, that would have clashed with the construction of the Bremer-Haus[31]. It was for this reason that SAT attacked the construction plans at court, and due to the Austro-Hungarian law related to productive and unproductive land, it turned out, that the Section Bremen lacked the necessary permission to build the Bremer-Haus. The long court process, that was closely followed by the

[30] Alessandro Ceredi, *Le nostre case sui monti: Vicende storiche e sociali dei rifugi SAT* (SAT - Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini, 2022).
[31] Ceredi, *Le nostre case sui monti: Vicende storiche e sociali dei rifugi SAT*, 77-78.

whole Alpenverein, left the Section Bremen nearly bankrupt, and cast a menacing shadow over all other Alpenverein huts in the region. This example shows how, despite the multicultural nature of the Habsburg Empire, alpinist associations organized themselves along national-ethnic lines, and engaged in the battle for territory in their own way. In this shadow war, the Italians felt it was so important to remove the presence of German climbers from the mountain, that they did not hesitate to involve themselves in a lengthy legal battle.

The story of the Quintino Sella and Tuckett huts is similar: in the Brenta Dolomites, the Section Trient of Alpenverein set out to build a mountain refuge in 1899. The plan never materialized, and the ownership of the land was transferred to the Berlin section of Alpenverein. In the same area, the local municipality donated land to SAT intending to construct a mountain hut. The two plots in the ownership of the two associations were only a few meters apart. The Sella hut was inaugurated in 1906, in a ceremony attended by members of the Club Alpino Italiano (Italian Alpine Club - CAI), the Italian association of mountain sports. The hut was named after the former Italian Minister of Finances and founder of CAI, Quintino Sella. The Tuckett hut was inaugurated the same year, and was named after the legendary British climber Francis Fox Tuckett, one of the founding members of the Austrian Alpenverein. Shortly after its inauguration, an irredentist epigraph was added to the wall of the Sella refuge, which was censored by the Austrian authorities. SAT acquired the Tuckett hut after the annexation of South Tyrol, and according to a SAT publication, the two huts continue to function as one "welcoming entity". (Interestingly, Paolo Cognetti, the author of the famous"La otto montagne" writes about the Quintino Sella hut in his 2021 book "La felicità del lupo"[32], however, he does not mention the Tuckett hut. He describes a building next to the Sella as an old lodge built sometime at the end of the 19th century but does not attach a name or history to the construction.)

[32] Paolo Cognetti, *La felicità del lupo*, (Einaudi, 2021).

During the war, many SAT members volunteered to fight for the Italian army[33]. In 1917, SAT was dissolved again by the authorities, however, it was re-founded after the annexation of the Trentino and South Tyrol in 1920. With the annexation of the Trentino, SAT became a member organisation of CAI, and the Alpenverein huts of the annexed territories were transferred into SAT ownership. The huts with German names were promptly renamed in Italian, except for the Tuckett hut, that kept its original name.

Revisionism in the Alpenverein

The loss of ownership over climbing infrastructure was an obvious blow on the previously prosperous German and Austrian mountaineering culture in South Tyrol. The Alpenverein fostered attempts to retain the Germanness of South Tyrol via tourism: German alpinists were encouraged to stay at German-owned hotels, eat at German restaurants, and spend their money in a way that it benefits the German population of South Tyrol.[34] As Keller writes, these patriotic individuals had a political force behind their back: the Austrian Foreign Ministry advised climbing association to flood South Tyrol with their German-speaking members. The region's tourism initially plummeted after Mussolini's takeover, due to the constant fascist harassment that German-speakers had to endure. However, German mountaineers did not forget about their alpine compatriots. The Alpenverein regularly protested the fascist government's efforts of Italianization.

The Andreas Hofer Bund, named after a South Tyrolean Austrian patriot, was created soon after the division of South Tyrol and the Trentino from Austria – at the same time, streets and institutions named after Hofer were renamed, and his name was banished from public life. The charity organization's main goal was to foster the relationship between the German mainland and the seceded territories[35]. The Bund organised travelling to South Tyrol for German tourists.

[33] Cirolini and Mosna, *La S.A.T. Cento Anni 1872-1972,* 69.
[34] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 121-151.
[35] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 125-126.

For their time there, they were given a guideline of appropriate behaviour: they were advised to speak German, use German place names, and support German-owned businesses. Supporting this initiative, the Alpenverein also published its own dictionary of South Tyrolean place names translated to German, and an index of German-run hotels and businesses in the region.

In 1927, the Alpenverein took on a more direct role in fostering the German identity of South Tyrol[36]. In a confidential letter to the chapters, the executive board suggested that each chapter voluntarily "adopts" and sponsors a county in South Tyrol. The aim was to create the infrastructure for German mountaineers to safely visit the province, while also supporting German businesses, and fostering the national ties. The initiative was hardly a success, due to financial and executive difficulties.

Institutions of memory in the mountains of South Tyrol and the Trentino

The Tridentine and South Tyrolean memory landscape in the mountains offers diverse narratives and approaches to past nationalist endeavours. While some memory institutions offer critical engagement with nationalism and feature the experiences of both German and Italian alpine soldiers, others offer a narrower approach that is limited to the glorification of one community.

At the same time, mountaineering in the Trentino and South Tyrol is nowadays largely undisturbed by former ethnic struggles. Some refuges confiscated by the CAI were returned into Alpenverein ownership, and the South Tyrolean branch of the Alpenverein also managed to construct new mountain huts. The South Tyrolean Alpenverein functions alongside the SAT: one in German, the other in Italian. Renowned South Tyrolean mountaineer Reinhold Messner gives interviews both in German and Italian, and he does not participate in any nationalist groups.

[36] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 126-127.

Punta Linke archaeological site / Archaeological Museum Trentino

The Spazio Archeologico Sotterraneo SASS (SASS Underground Archaeological Space) is an archaeological museum, that's original aim is to display Trento's Roman remains. Between November 2023 and January 2024, a temporary exhibition showcased the findings of the archaeological research at the Punta Linke mountain, related to the excavation of an Austro-Hungarian battle station from World War I.[37]

Despite the looting and the harsh weather conditions, the low temperatures and remoteness of the high altitude conserved the remains of the station extraordinarily well. Much of the artifacts were covered by ice up until recently. The site is found at 3629m high, not far from the Ortler-massif. Since 2014, the site itself is also designated as a museum, but due to the risk of avalanches, it is accessible during the summer, and only for experienced alpinists. The exhibition at the SASS provides a detailed overview of the archaeological findings. The recovered objects provide a glimpse into the daily life of the Austro-Hungarian soldiers stationed at the mountain and displays the specificities of mountain warfare. Besides the cans of sardines and a sauerkraut bucket, visitors can also see the straw overshoes that soldiers wore against the freezing temperatures. Although information is only provided in Italian, the wording of the signs is devoid of nationalist phrases and provides a complete account on the archaeological works at the site.

The exhibition narrates the findings from an archaeological viewpoint. The material is discussed in an "ideological vacuum": the nationalist aims that lead to the outbreak of World War I are omitted from the narrative. The focus is on the technologies that allow researchers to reconstruct daily life on the alpine frontline. The exhibition is not concerned with the

[37] "History in the Ice. Archaeology of the Great War at Punta Linke," *Trentino Cultura*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.cultura.trentino.it/eng/Events/History-in-the-ice.-Archaeology-of-the-Great-War-at-Punta-Linke.

heroization or victimization of the Austro-Hungarian combatants; rather, they are painted as individuals, who employed special tactics to survive in the unforgiving environment of the Alps.

Alpini Museum

The mountain corps of the Italian army, the Alpini was founded in 1872. The group historically enjoys good relations with SAT: some SAT members volunteered to found units of the Alpini, that were named after Italian-speaking Austrian cities at the time. The Alpini and also played a large part in the struggle for the Trentino and South Tyrol in World War I. The Alpini museum in Trento[38] is run by the Alpini, and is housed on top of the Doss Trento, a hill overlooking the historic city centre. The hilltop is shared by the museum, and a memorial dedicated to Cesare Battisti, an Italian nationalist hero. The museum is a good example of a memory institution, where the actor of memory (in this case, the Italian army) does not engage critically with its past, but rather chooses to reproduce and display its identity via aits own narration of history.

Shortly after entering, the visitor can see a large mural of Alpini soldiers that appear to be wearing a uniform with similar style to German WWII uniforms. Upon careful inspection, the visitor can see that the painting was made in 1939, however, the origin and purpose of the painting is not revealed. Here, the narration avoids discussing the controversial ties between the fascist ideology and the nationalist-irredentist nature of the Alpini, as well as the Italian-German alliance prior to the German occupation of Italy. Instead, the narrative presented asserts tat the Alpini fought heroically in the war for the protection of the Italian nation, and after the occupation, “many” members became involved with resistance groups (the exact percentage or number is not clarified).

Information in the museum is shown in Italian, German, and English. The exhibition mainly consists of objects: uniforms, insignia, weapons, and practical objects of mountain life are

[38] Website of the Alpini Museum, *Museonazionalealpini.it*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://museonazionalealpini.it/index.php/it/.

included. Images are mostly shown on digital boards. The exhibition does not contain openly Fascist objects and images; however, it does not contextualise the materials from the Fascist era. The material also includes implicit Fascist propaganda in the form of postcards. A collection of postcards from this era is shown on a digital screen: the pictures always featured the image of mountains, sometimes accompanied by slogans equating soldierly struggle with climbing and mountain landscapes (e.g. "The more I climb, the more I'm worth"). There is no critical engagement with the history of the Alpini whatsoever: the disastrous operations that the Alpini participated in during WWII are hailed as challenges that took heavy casualties, but also yielded some success.

The emphasis on the relationship between mountains and the character of the Alpini is clearly narrated. The idea that the hard and rocky surfaces of mountains "harden the men" that come to work/fight in this environment is repeated several times over the course of the exhibition. The Alpini are glorified as the special class of "mountain men" of the Italian army. They are described as strong, quiet, and shy, but always ready to help those in need "with a smile on their face". In one part of the exhibition, the compulsory armed service in the Alpini is described as the process that "made men out of boys" and is also referred to as a glorious time of community, manhood, and comradeship for young men.

In the Alpini Museum, the idea of militarist alpinism is shown in a positive light. The soldiers are described as akin to the venue of their work: they are hardened by the mountain rocks and made agile by the difficult passages. The controversies and logical fallacies of nationalising the alpine landscape are not discussed in the museum; rather, the visitor is confronted with a nostalgic narration of the time when military service was compulsory in Italy, and men had a chance to forge a unique bond with their comrades among the mountains. The Alpini museum as lieu de mémoire fosters an uncritical approach to the history of militarism and mountaineering. The narration of the exhibition inspires a sense of pride in those, who belong

into the concerned groups (Alpini, soldiers, mountaineers), and may even be understood as propaganda, that seeks to inspire non-members to join the community.

Tunnels of Piedicastello

Due to its physical proximity and differing narrative, the Le Gallerie museum in the Piedicastello tunnels provides an interesting contrast to the Alpini Museum[39]. The purpose of the exhibition is to display the local history of Trento in the 20th century. The museum uses traditional formats: pictures, texts, and a limited number of digital screens to showcase the narrative. Information is only shown in Italian, however, its complex engagement with the local history makes it interesting for international visitors as well.

The exhibition focuses on the "cold hard facts" of war: the atrocities committed against civilians, the gruesome combat deaths, and the oppression of the fascist era. However, the exhibition elegantly avoids becoming a historical "horror-show" by hiding the sensitive images in drawers with viewer discretion advisory. At the same time, the exhibition also holds empathy for the "everyday" participants the conflict: at one point, the possible choices of an Italian soldier after the German occupation are showcased, listing all the "pros and cons" of each path. Therefore, the exhibition does not make grand statements of the great number of partisans, but it showcases the risks of being one. With that, the narrative holds an explanation for why a large segment of society chose to remain passive in the face of the Nazi occupation, dispersing the myth of an overarching Italian resistance.

The Piedicastello tunnels originally cut through the Doss Trento hill, but they are no longer in operation. One of the two tunnels houses a modern history museum belonging to the Trentino History Museum Foundation (Fondazione museo storico del Trentino), an organization in charge of several history museums of the city. The foundation collects archival material of the

[39] "Trentino History Museum Foundation, the Tunnels of Piedicastello - Trento," *Trentino Cultura*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.cultura.trentino.it/eng/Cultural-venues/All-cultural-venues/Museums-and-collections/Trentino-history-museum-foundation-the-Tunnels-of-Piedicastello-Trento.

province from the 19th century onwards. Likewise, the Piedicastello Tunnel museum exhibition presents the history of Trento in the 20th century, while the other tunnel functions as a gallery and conference space[40]. Although the history exhibition does not centre the role and symbolism of the Alps in the history of the Trentino, the Alpini campaigns of World War II are mentioned, exposing their futility and high death toll.

The Tunnels of Piedicastello exhibition provides a critical insight into the history of 20th century Trentino, while considering the larger picture of fascist Italy and the German occupation as well. The narrative does not favour any groups or nationalities: rather, it showcases the seams and ideological divides between the members of the national unit. With that, the exhibition as lieu de mémoire seeks to commemorate everyone, who stood witness to, became a participant in, or fell victim to the atrocities of the 20th century in the Trentino.

The Messner Mountain Museum Ortles

The name of Reinhold Messner is hardly unfamiliar to those in the contemporary climbing community: he is hailed as one of the best alpinists to have ever lived, however, his figure is also surrounded by controversies. He is native to South Tyrol and given the height and cultural significance of the Ortler, his foundation created a mountain museum in Solda, at the foot of the massif.

Messner was born in 1944 in a small German-speaking community near Brixen in South Tyrol. He started climbing at a young age with his brother, Günther. Messner made a name for himself in the Alps, and already as a renowned rock climber, he was invited to join a Himalaya expedition to the previously unclimbed Rupal face of the Nanga Parbat. The expedition turned out to be a disastrous success: while both brothers reached the summit, Günther died on the descent, and several of Messner's toes had to be amputated. He was also involved in disputes about his brother's death: Messner asserts, that his brother was swept by an avalanche, while

[40] "Trentino History Museum Foundation, the Tunnels of Piedicastello - Trento," *Trentino Cultura*

other members of the expedition team say he abandoned his altitude-sick brother to descend on the previously uncharted Diamir face of Nanga Parbat[41]. Since then, discoveries of Günther Messner's remains support Messner's version of the events. Due to the loss of his toes, Messner gave up on other rock-climbing projects, and turned towards high altitude mountaineering and other forms of expeditions. He became the first person to climb all eight-thousanders without the use of supplemental oxygen and is widely renowned today as the world's best climber.

Messner cites his home in the Dolomites as a key factor in his climbing success[42]. In an interview he said what he had, and other climbers lacked is a special "instinct" for climbing. However, he does not connect his special ability to his roots. Messner rarely talks about nationality. In an interview, he describes climbing as a way to get out of the "narrow, dark South Tyrolean mountain world"[43]. He describes his father as a man who returned from the war disillusioned with Nazi politics and took to climbing as a way to remember the good things about his younger years in the '30s. For the next generation however, climbing was not about the performance of identity; rather, it was a way of escaping from the roots, and becoming someone new.

A close focus on individual challenges and achievements shines through all Messner's interviews. He revolutionized high altitude climbing by applying the alpine style to the Himalayan terrain: instead of building a long chain of camps with the help of many team members, he would carry his own minimal equipment[44]. He completed most of his climbs by himself, and he has also been criticized for his individualistic behaviour. Messner has not submitted to group identity: he is a climber for himself, by himself.

[41] Kate Connolly, "Nanga Parbat Film Restarts Row over Messner Brothers' Fatal Climb," *The Guardian* (The Guardian, January 19, 2010), accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.theguardian.com/world/2010/jan/19/nanga-parbat-film-controversy.
[42] Apple Books, "Reinhold Messner," *Academy of Achievement*, last modified January 30, 2019, accessed June 7, 2024, https://achievement.org/achiever/reinhold-messner/.
[43] Les Guthman, *Messner* (Outside Television, 2002), https://vimeo.com/222790148. 22:40
[44] Guthman, *Messner*, 9:10

The idea of the museum also came about as a convenient project for Messner: he bought and renovated a castle near Merano in South Tyrol. For the schooling of his children, he decided to move his family to Merano, and opened the gates of the castle for visitors, so that owning the castle remains cost-efficient. The project eventually grew into a network of six museums, all showcasing aspects of mountain life and mountaineering. As Messner said, his goal is to have visitors experience emotions related to mountains, and to make them understand the peculiarities and importance of the mountain terrain[45].

The Messner Mountain Museum is a collective of six separate institutions scattered across South Tyrol. The collections are housed in castles as well as modern buildings. The exhibitions focus on multiple, mountain-related themes: they offer visitors the chance to learn about geographical phenomena, and they also showcase the historical significance of the locations. At the Ortler/Ortles location, the focus is mainly on ice: glaciers, crevasses, Arctic expeditions, and ice climbing. There is also a section dedicated to the war experience in the Alps[46].

The Messner Mountain Museums are lieux de mémoire to the way humans relate to mountains. While the aim is to introduce the mountain ranges all around the world, the perspective presented is fundamentally human. The main themes are mountains as places of spirituality, mountain agriculture, geography, and mountaineering. Therefore, the Messner Mountain Museum network is a memento of human presence in the mountains, regardless of time, continent or nationality.

[45] Guthman, *Messner*, 31:40

[46] "Messner Mountain Museen," *Messner-mountain-museum.it*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.messner-mountain-museum.it/.

CASE STUDY II: The Watzmann and Berchtesgaden

Introduction

The Alps take up a marginal percentage of the total land mass of Germany, however, mountains have played a large role in the German national imagination. The Watzmann peak above the town of Berchtesgaden has been a special focus of German imagery: it was the topic of Caspar David Friedrich's famous painting as well as many other artworks. Berchtesgaden was also a key site of Nazism as Hitler's chosen home: the image of the town and the surrounding alpine landscape was marketed by Nazi propaganda as a symbol of German nationalism. In this chapter, I will explore the symbolism of the Watzmann-image as well as the utilisation of the mountains in the images of Hitler. Furthermore, the relationship between the German and Austrian Alpenverein and Nazi ideology will also be thematised. Finally, I will explore the contemporary commemoration institutions of Hitler's mountain presence.

The Watzmann: Geography and history

The Watzmann is the third highest, and perhaps the most recognisable mountain of Germany. Its sharp peaks tower over the illustrious little town of Berchtesgaden in Southern Bavaria. Out of the three highest German peaks, this is the only one that is not separated by the border: the other two are found on the Zugspitz-massiv, on the border with Austria. Due to its height and peculiar formations, the Watzmann is a widely referenced topic in German culture and arts.

The highest peak of the massif, the "Mittelspitze" stands at 2,713 meters. It is surrounded by minor peaks: the "Südspitze" stands at 2,712, and the Hocheck at 2,651. In traditional folklore, the two main and visibly distinguishable peaks of the massive were referred to as the Watzmann and the "Kleiner Watzmann", or "Watzmannfrau". The smaller peaks along the ridge between these two are called the "Watzmannkinder". According to the local legend, the Watzmann was once a cruel king that ruled over the land and was turned into stone as a punishment for his

crimes, alongside with his family[47]. The naming of these natural phenomena indicates the importance and personification of the massif in local beliefs.

The first ascent to the Mittelspitze was achieved quite early on, in 1800, by Slovenian mountaineer and chaplain of Salzburg, Valentin Stanic. He undertook the challenge from the north face of the mountain, which is, in the case of Watzmann, the easiest route to climb. The technically much more difficult eastern face route was first climbed in 1868 by Johann Grill Kederbacher, the first authorised mountain guide in Germany. He later became the long-term maintainer of the Watzmannhaus. The first fatal climbing accident of the Watzmann happened in 1890, during the fourth climb of the eastern route: a climber named Ch. Schöllhorn fell into his death at the lower part of the mountain. The site of the accident is known as "Schöllhornplatte" until today. The accident resulted in a ban for climbing the eastern face until 1909.

The Watzmannhaus at 1930 meters is one of the largest mountain huts of the German Alpenverein. It was first built in 1888 on the commission of the Münich section of the German Alpenverein. Since then, it had been modernised and extended, and it is still open for climbers during the summer months. Its history had been free of controversies, unlike the South Tyrolean mountain huts mentioned in the previous chapter[48].

Watzmann Imagery

Caspar David Friedrich, the "national painter" of German Romanticism has famously stayed away from Alpine topics in his art. He himself never visited the South German mountain range. He painted only two images of the Alps: the first one was a peaceful morning view of the

[47] "The 'Watzmann' and It's Famous Legend," *Bergsteigerdoerfer.org*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://eng.bergsteigerdoerfer.org/1091-1-The-Watzmann-and-its-famous-legend.html.
[48] "Die Geschichte des Watzmannhauses," *Alpenverein-muenchen-oberland.de*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.alpenverein-muenchen-oberland.de/watzmannhaus/geschichte.

Austrian Gebirgssee. It sold for an extraordinarily high price: Mitchell[49] theorises, that this might have been the reason Friedrich decided to paint the Watzmann the next year.

Mitchell lists a number of artworks from the Romantic era depicting the Watzmann massif. The peculiar formation of the peaks gave way to multi-faceted symbolism in the images. The common meaning behind all of the artworks is that they were seeking to explain the laws of the world by depicting this wonder of nature. As Mitchell writes, it can be an illustration to the then developing, "thoroughly German" science of geognosy, by depicting the mountain formation as a "microcosm", created by the same laws that govern the greater macrocosm. In the worldview of geognosy, mountains took a subordinate role: they existed only because God intended them to, for the comfort of man. According to Ozturk, however, historical events also had an influence on Friedrich's Watzmann-image: while the Watzmann depicts the timeless divine against the temporality of human affairs, it is also a symbol of German national resurgence after the Napoleonic wars[50].

By 1825, the year that Friedrich created his interpretation of the peculiar peaks, the image of the Watzmann as a representation of the divine order was a well-established topic in German art. Mitchell points to a domestic scene titled "Donnerstag" in Ferdinand Olivier's series titled "Sieben Gegenden aus Salzburg und Berchtesgaden. Geordnet nach den Sieben Tagen der Woche": the mountains in the background represent the everlasting presence of God, while the workers in the foreground signal the transitory state of men. While the city of Berchtesgaden is not visible on Friedrich's painting, it is seen in great detail on Olivier's image.

Nazi propaganda imagery also took advantage of the Watzmann's proximity to Hitler's Berghof. After 1933, images of the Führer were seen everywhere. Hitler was presented as both a strong political figure as well as a domestic character, a "good neighbour" to all his subjects. The role

[49] Timothy Mitchell, "Caspar David Friedrich's Der Watzmann: German Romantic Landscape Painting and Historical Geology" in *The Art Bulletin* 66 (1984): 452–464.
[50] Anthony Ozturk, "Interlude: Geo-Poetics: The Alpine Sublime in Art and Literature, 1779–1860," in *Heights of Reflection* (Boydell and Brewer, 2012), 77–97. 86-87.

of his mountain residence in the propagation of this narrative was ever present: the mountain imagery allowed Hitler to present himself both as a strong leader in a harsh environment as well as a domestic man surrounded by völkisch kitsch.

An escape from modernity: Berchtesgaden as Hitler's Chosen Home

Due to its geographical layout, it was the Untersberg massif that was most often utilised in Berghof imagery: this is the mountain that was directly visible from the Berghof. Hitler was photographed in front of his great panorama window, one of the main innovations of the residence[51]. The panorama window could be found in the "Great Hall" – a name that awakens a medieval atmosphere in the home of a traditional ruler. The image of Hitler and the Untersberg also alluded to another local legend: in folktales, Emperor Charlemagne or Barbarossa was said to be sleeping under the Untersberg massif. Someday, he would awaken to lead his army to defend the German Reich in a cataclysmic battle. Hitler was aware of the legend, and confessed, that he chose his residence to face the Untersberg intentionally[52].

The other frequently referenced peak was the Hoher Göll, towering above the village of Obersalzberg. The Berghof was painted[53] as a modest, traditional house with the peak in the background, alluding to the Romantic Watzmann-images: the mountain signified strength, order, purpose, and divine presence.

Hitler's presence in Obersalzberg was political from the beginning. He came to the alpine town first in 1923 to meet with Dietrich Eckart, a völkisch poet and activist, who was hiding in the Alps from a police warrant. Eckart had already built a circle of like-minded peers in the area;

[51] see Hugo Jaeger's photograph of Hitler in front of his panorama window in Sven Keller et al., *Hitler und der Obersalzberg: Idyll und Verbrechen: Katalog zur Dauerausstellung der Dokumentation Obersalzberg*, 2023. page 19.

[52] Despina Stratigakos, *Hitler at Home* (Yale University Press, 2020), http://dx.doi.org/10.12987/9780300187601. 79.

[53] see Anton Reinbold's 1939 painting „Des Führers Berghof" in „Hitler und der Obersalzberg: Idyll und Verbrechen" – Catalogue of the permanent exhibition of the Dokumentation Obersalzberg. 2023. Institut für Zeitgeschichte München – Berlin. p.15

this network of Nazi sympathizers played just as much of a role in Hitler's decision to move here as did his affinity for the mountain landscape[54].

One's home as a private space can become a reflection of one's identity. As Richardson[55] writes, "home" is not merely a building, but an intersection of performance and identity: a space where one feels safe to perform themselves, and as a base, from where one can launch their potential into the outside world. Hitler's Berghof residence was framed as such a space: the alpine landscape was cited as an inspiration to his policies. Some have even maintained that Hitler was inspired to write Mein Kampf by the surrounding monumental structures, that functioned as a symbol of the revival of German culture and civilization. The imagery with Hitler's residence, dogs, and Aryan children depicted a "Lebensraum utopia", and gave it shape and form as a realizable goal. The Berghof was a miniature, a mock-up to the Nazi promise.

Hitler employed a number of tools to perform his identity via his living space and portray himself as a good neighbour to his subjects. The Berghof served as a reflection of Nazi ideas and values: tradition, modesty, and strength. Richardson[56] defines the construction of a home as a performance of identity. At home, one has the power to perform their authentic selves. Although Hitler's living space came under constant media attention, he consciously used this conceptualisation of "home": his performance at Obersalzberg was propagated as his true identity and authentic personality. At the Berghof, the performance of home was converted into power: power was utilised to construct the space, and the space was used to gain more power.

[54] Sven Keller et al., *Hitler und der Obersalzberg: Idyll und Verbrechen : Katalog zur Dauerausstellung der Dokumentation Obersalzberg*, 2023. 16.
[55] Joanna Richardson, "Performing Home: An Introduction," in *Place and Identity: The Performance of Home*, ed. Joanna Richardson (Routledge, 2019), 1–19.
[56] Richardson, *Performing Home,* 11-15.

Obersalzberg functioned as a second seat of power besides Berlin. As such, the Berghof was expanded into a heavily guarded residence after 1935. However, the façade of the traditional farmhouse was maintained through careful aesthetic management of the space.

Gerdy Troost was a well-known contributor to the aesthetic of the Berghof. As Stratigakos writes, she and her husband shared with Hitler an idea of eternal art that differs from the modern Zeitgeist[57]. Hitler and Troost grew to become close acquaintances, who frequently discussed art and architecture. Troost famously refused to denounce her friendship with Hitler in the post-war years[58]. She was tasked with fashioning the interior of the Berghof. She created the atmosphere of "Bauernstubenidyll"[59] in Hitler's residence: she hid the modern construction materials among layers of traditionalist architecture and design.

Hitler's domestic image was propagated to inspire empathy. The interior design of his homes can be interpreted as the self-representation of the regime. Domestic Hitler was one of the most successful tropes of Nazi propaganda. It was an effort to soften Hitler's image: the modest and traditional outlook of the Berghof stood in contrast to the monumental structures of Nazi party rallies in Nuremberg and Berlin. Nazi propaganda "knowingly manipulated the interest in Hitler's private life to create a disconnect"[60] between his pleasant private persona and his ruthless political agenda.

Hitler's domestic image was also marketed for consumption, especially in his Berchtesgaden home: collectible stickers of Hitler's home life were sold in cigarette packages. The image of the Berghof was found on decorative objects, wall hangings, and postcards – one could even buy a miniature version of the house decorated with a swastika flag[61]. The domestic life of the

[57] Stratigakos, *Hitler at Home,* 109.
[58] Stratigakos, *Hitler at Home*, 138.
[59] „Führerbilder" in Keller et al., *Hitler und der Obersalzberg*, 19.
[60] Stratigakos, *Hitler at Home,* 6.
[61] Keller et al., *Hitler und der Obersalzberg,* 33-38.

Führer was also documented in carefully fashioned albums: the 1933 publication "Adolf Hitlers Wahlheimat" included illustrations of the interiors of Haus Wachenfeld as well as interviews with Hitler's neighbours[62]. The narrative of the album did not mention the increasing modernisation of the Berghof residence, and the violent details of land expropriations in the area were also omitted.

The Hotel zum Türken was one of the closest buildings to Haus Wachenfeld. It also housed a pub and restaurant, where Hitler frequently drank with party members during the years of his relative anonymity. However, as the expansion of the Berghof residence began, the land where the building stood became a planned construction site. The owner initially refused to sell his property to Hitler. Although he was a member of the NSDAP, and Hitler's personal acquaintance, he was harshly punished: he came under police custody and was banished from the town.

The family owning the Hotel zum Türken was not the only one driven away from Obersalzberg: Jewish families who owned property in the area were systematically purged[63]. Arthur Eichengrün as a successful chemist purchased a holiday home in Obersalzberg in 1915. In 1930, the family started receiving anonymous hate mail in the cottage. In the hostile atmosphere, the family decided to sell the house in 1932. Carl von Linde, an engineer also held property in Obersalzberg since 1884. In 1936, two years after his death, his family had to give up their land due to the construction work in Obersalzberg.

[62] Stratigakos, *Hitler at Home*, 161-168.
[63] Keller et al., *Hitler und der Obersalzberg,* 17.

Attitudes to modernisation and the appeal of Nazism in the Alpenverein

This chapter discusses the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion in the German and Austrian Alpenverein: most often, the driving force behind these attitudes was the rejection or acceptance of changes brought about by the modernisation of the Alpine environment.

The start of "modern" mountaineering already changed the alpine landscape in many ways. The alpine towns that were previously thought backwards and uncivilised – best to avoid – became objects of fetishization as peaceful venues of coexistence with nature, and as sites of heroic challenges. The process was accelerated by the increasing availability of tourism for the masses. Mountains gained a special status as desirable holiday destinations, where one can challenge themselves in various sport disciplines, and return to an idealised version of nature[64].

Attitudes to modernization in the Alps animated the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion, as the included and excluded groups were defined in relation to their benefits or losses related to modernisation. Modernity was ever present in discussions of inclusion and exclusion in the alpine space. While some mountain enthusiasts rejoiced in the increasing accessibility of their beloved peaks, others worried, that the masses of tourist would corrupt their sacred space. The anti-modernist language they employed was often akin to that of Nazi propaganda. Nazis resented the disarmament of Germany, and the perceived takeover of the Jewish population; alpinists feared the same in relation to women and Jews in the mountains.

As it was briefly explored in the section on Friedrich's painting of the Watzmann, the Romantic desire for a return to nature and the admiration of mountains went hand in hand. This image of the mountains as a refuge from the bustling urban life held out well into the 20th century – arguably, it still persists in the minds of many hikers and mountaineers. The Nazi discourse on

[64] Stephen O'Shea, *The Alps: A Human History from Hannibal to Heidi and Beyond* (New York, NY: WW Norton, 2018). 6-10.

modernity touched upon questions that the Alpenverein faced: whether to allow the increasing modernisation of the mountain environment to broaden the scope of alpinists, or to restrict access by maintaining the "natural state" of the Alps[65].

Nazi ideology drew in anti-consumerist mountaineers. As the Alps opened up for mass tourism, more and more clashes of interests surfaced among different groups of alpinists. Despite their anti-modern rhetoric and self-conceptualisation, mountaineers were largely an elitist society: although they rejected the mechanisation of mountains in principle, they themselves relied on the latest inventions to get to the mountains and climb them. Wilms[66] cites telling statistics of the origins of Alpenverein members from 1909: an overwhelming majority of 71.5% came from towns far away from the Alps. 12.4% lived relatively nearby, while only 16.1% resided in the alpine regions themselves. To make the Alps accessible to climbers from faraway cities, new infrastructure was needed. Furthermore, those, who did not grow up in an alpine area initially needed local guides for safe passage in the mountains. This highlights the hypocritical nature of the alpinist society: they relied on modernisation to set foot in the Alps, but at the same time, they were in constant discussions on barring others from doing the same.

The attitude to women among the ranks of the Alpenverein was also tied to modernisation: women were blamed for the mechanisation of the mountains, as they were thought weaker and in need of more assistance. Similarly, the growing accessibility of mountain sports for the working class created a concern, and the Alpenverein tried to bar them from participation by raising member fees. The debate on the mechanisation of mountains drew exclusion in its wake[67].

[65] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 152-182.
[66] Wilfried Wilms, "Eduard Pichl, 'Autobiographical Sketch' (1914) and 'The Alpine Association and German Purity' (1923)," in *Mountains and the German Mind: Translations from Gessner to Messner, 1541-2009*, ed. Sean Ireton And Schaumann (Camden House, 2020), 199–217.
[67] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 176-180.

Climbing and militarism

Hermann Czánt, a Nazi-supporting alpinist was obsessed with the idea of militarization via alpinism. Czánt was born in 1876 in Leschkirch/Újegyház into a German-speaking family that migrated to Transylvania in the 12th century[68]. Both his father and brother were renowned officers of the Austro-Hungarian army. Hermann also served in the army as an officer, and he was known for his role in the propagation of Alpine warfare. He published several books and articles both in German and Hungarian, in which he argues for mountaineering techniques to be adopted among methods of warfare in the Austro-Hungarian army. He died in 1937 in Budapest: the magazine "Hungarian Tourist Life" (Magyar Turista Élet)[69] praised him as an exceptional mountaineer, alpine skier, and writer in the subject of mountain warfare, whose writings and ideas were well known in a domestic and international context.

Czánt's ethnicity and national affiliation could be a source of debate: he stemmed from a German family, and his home language was German as well. The inscription on his brother's memorial, who fell in World War I is only in German as well. At the same time, a 1909 recension of his book on winter mountain warfare in the "Nemzeti Sport" (National Sport) magazine refers to him as a Hungarian author with "love for the Hungarian race"[70].

Czánt did not only prepare for the next battle: he envisioned a total war between the Slavic menace of the East, and the Germanic (or other non-Slavic) people of Europe[71]. In the preparation for this event, he saw mountain sports as a key for the physical and psychological development of the soldiers. Getting used to dangerous and unexpected situations in the

[68] Nagy Háború Blog, "Czant százados végzetes döntése," *Blog.hu*, last modified November 20, 2013, accessed June 7, 2024, https://nagyhaboru.blog.hu/2013/11/20/czant_szazados_vegzetes_dontese.
[69] Magyar Turista Élet, „Czánt Hermann" in *Magyar Turista Élet*, 1937 (Volume 5, Issue 24). Accessed in the Arcanum Digital Archive
[70] Serényi, Jenő dr, „Czánt Hermann könyve: Téli turisztika, téli alpinizmus és katonai szolgálat hegyvidéken" in *Nemzeti Sport* (Volume 7, Issue 52). Accessed in the Arcanum Digital Archive
[71] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 186.

mountains would harden the men, create a brotherly bond between them, and the magnificent natural realm would contribute to the love of the nation and land.

As Keller writes, "'unselfish struggle' in the Alps neatly wrapped fascist ideology in the neo-romanticism of nature lovers"[72]. The ideological background of Alpinism and Nazism was largely compatible, which made the Gleichschaltung process (synchronization of organisations with Nazi ideology) easy in case of the Alpenverein. By 1933, the Alpenverein was more or less "self-synchronised". However, it wasn't a seamless alignment: due to its many chapters spread across two countries, the AV initially retained a large degree of independence.

Eduard Pichl: Alpine Purity and a Jew-free Alpenverein

Eduard Pichl was a prominent figure of the German-Austrian mountaineering scene in the first half of the 20th century. He was an accomplished mountaineer himself, dedicating his efforts to "guideless climbing" – that is, to find new routes and climb them by his own strength and skills, without a local guide. His climbing pursuits earned him fame among his contemporaries; however, it was his radical far-right views that put him in the spotlight in the German and Austrian Alpenverein.

Pichl was popular among his contemporaries: in 1923, he was elected as the leader of the Alpenverein Section Austria, and one of the association's hut in the Carnic Alps was named after him. The Pichlhütte was renamed Wolayerseehütte in 2002, when Pichl's memory became too controversial for the Alpenverein. However, in the Dachstein massif, there is still a climbing route named after him.

In the politically polarised interwar years, Pichl became known as an "alpine agitator" rather than a climber. Besides his membership in the Verein, he was active in nationalist "defence associations" (Wehrverbände), and he vocally campaigned for the exclusion of Jews from the

[72] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 187.

Verein. His calls found potent breeding ground among alpinists: the membership of Section Austria grew from 6,000 to 10,000 under his leadership. Furthermore, he also opposed modernisation in the mountains: he also campaigned against the construction of cable cars.

In an autobiographical sketch from 1914, Pichl already lays the background to his traditionalist sentiments regarding the mountain landscape. He describes alpinism as his refuge from the "monotony of everyday life", as a romantic escape, that re-awakens the desire for adventure that he thinks is lost on the modern man. He also describes the feeling of completing a challenge by summiting a mountain: he writes that he incorporates the mountain into himself, and he also becomes part of the mountain. At the same time, already in this purely autobiographical article, he stresses, that one's dedication to their nation and Volk is a true virtue, while climbing is just a "preparation" for the real responsibility of national obligations[73].

It was Pichl who first used the term "Alpine purity" when discussing a Jew-free Alpenverein. He lobbied for the acceptance of the Aryan paragraph Alpenverein-wide. In his essay "The Alpenverein and German Purity", he discusses the dangers that the inclusion of the predominantly Jewish Donauland chapter poses to the German identity of the association. He cites the back-stabbing myth of World War I as a reason to be distrustful of and vigilant against Jews. He also refers to the foreign origin of Jews as well as the indigeneity of Germans in the Alpine terrain.

Reading these two articles from Pichl, one can see the progression of his exclusionary attitude. He considers the mountains a sacred space, where everything should remain untouched – untouched by modern distraction, such as modernisation, mechanisation, and foreign entities (Jews). These two pieces serve as an illustration of the Alpenverein's progression from a romantic, traditionalist, and völkisch association to a violently antisemitic movement.

[73] Wilms, *Eduard Pichl*, 209.

Inclusion and Exclusion in the Alpenverein: The Donauland-affair

Pichl's idea of the Alps as a sacred space polluted by Jews found fertile soil among the members of the Alpenverein. In 1921, Pichl got elected as chairman of the Verein, and as such, he garnered the votes of ¾ members to allow the inclusion of an Aryan paragraph into the chapters' constitution[74]. Many sections took the opportunity to ban their Jewish members and political opponents. Some of the alpinists who lost their membership this way founded the Sektion Donauland in return. Donauland defined itself as an apolitical club interested only in pursuing mountain sports[75]. Members remained in the Alpenverein and retained access to the association's climbing infrastructure. By the end of 1922, with about 3,000 members, the Donauland was the second largest club of the section Vienna[76]. Amidst the remaining antisemitic tensions, the club also obtained the Glorer Hütte in the Glockner Group, guaranteeing safe passage in the Alps for its members.

Pichl and other antisemites in the Verein adjusted their vision: they started to campaign for the exclusion of Donauland from the Alpenverein. Members of the Verein also expressed their exclusionary views on the mountains: guestbooks in the refuges were scribbled with swastikas[77]; signs saying "Jews and members of the association Donauland are not welcome here" decorated the lodges[78]. In 1924, the matter came to a decisive end: after years of agitation and demands from Pichl, the executive board of the Alpenverein finally yielded and expelled Donauland[79].

[74]Archiv und Bibliothek des DAV, München and Archiv des OeAV, Innsbruck. „Ausgeschlossen: Jüdische Bergsportler und der Alpenverein". Deutscher Alpenverein and Österreichischer Alpenverein, 2012. 4.
[75] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 134.
[76] Archiv und Bibliothek des DAV, München and Archiv des OeAV, Innsbruck. 2012. p.5
[77] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 140.
[78] 1921 image in the 2012 publication of the Deutscher Alpenverein and the Österreichischer Alpenverein. p.4
[78] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 134.
[79] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 140-141.

Donauland did not disband itself: it sought to fight the decision on legal grounds. Although unsuccessful, the club managed to garner significant support from German chapters, and it reconstituted itself as the independent association Alpenverein Donauland. The Alpenverein Berlin – another independent association – was founded in solidarity with Donauland[80]. Together, the two clubs constructed the Friesenberghaus in the Zillertal Alps in Austrian Tyrol in 1931[81].

The Alpenverein Berlin was disbanded in 1934 after Hitler's rise to power. Donauland soon followed suit in 1938 after the Anschluss[82]. The ownership of the two Donauland huts were transferred to the Wehrmacht (Friesenberghaus) and the German Alpenverein (Glorer Hütte). After the war, Donauland was reconstituted by the few members who returned from ghettoes, concentration camps, or frontlines. The ownership of the refuges was transferred back to the organisation. However, the once populous club did not have enough members to appropriately maintain the huts; the Friesenberghaus was given over to the German Alpenverein Sektion Berlin in 1968, and the ownership of the Glorer Hütte went to Sektion Eichstätt. In 1976, presumably due to the low membership, Donauland finally disbanded itself.

Mountain huts against hate: afterlife of antisemitism in the Alpenverein

During the year of the regime, mountain refuges became "ideological markers"[83] of the domination over the alpine space. The exclusion of Jews from mountain huts practically meant their exclusion from the mountains altogether: without staying in a hut overnight, one is hardly able to undertake longer climbs. After obtaining the Friesenberghaus as a peculiar example of alpine solidarity and resistance against antisemitism, the German Alpenverein undertook

[80] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps*, 145.
[81] Archiv und Bibliothek des DAV, München and Archiv des OeAV, Innsbruck. 2012. p.5
[82] "Friesenberghaus, Tirol" (n.d.), accessed June 7, 2024, https://oe1.orf.at/artikel/644786/Friesenberghaus-Tirol.
[83] Keller, *Apostles of the Alps,* 151.

projects to display the background of the building and take a stance against exclusion in the Alps.

At the end of the '80s, the German Alpenverein published a series of articles about the history of the association in the '20s and '30s[84]. This was the late and slow beginning of the procession of antisemitism in the Verein. In a 2012 interview with Hubert Fritzenwallner, the housekeeper of the Friesenberghaus, he stated that, before his arrival in 1996, cooking utensils and cleaning cloths decorated with swastikas were still in use in the hut[85]. However, over the course of his management of the refuge, and due to a change of attitude in the Alpenverein, the building now stands as a remainder of Jewish resistance, and a statement against exclusion in the mountains.

The German Alpenverein with the support of the Austrian Alpenverein and Sektion Austria launched its initiative "Gegen Intoleranz und Hass" in 2001 to commemorate former members who suffered exclusion and persecution on the hands of the association[86]. Memorial tablets were placed at the organisation's headquarters in Munich, at the Glorer Hütte, and in the Friesenberghaus. With that, the status of the mountain huts as lieux de mémoire was openly confirmed by the association. In 2008, the German, Austrian, and South Tyrolean branches of the association jointly commissioned research into the history of the Verein in the early 20th century, and they published the results in 2011[87].

In the past decades, the Alpenverein has developed a rich history of engagement with the past. On the DAV website, visitors can access a multitude of informative brochures, papers, and

[84] Archiv und Bibliothek des DAV, München and Archiv des OeAV, Innsbruck. 2012. p.10
[85] "Holocaust & Bergsteigen: Hüter der Erinnerung," *Orf.at*, last modified September 30, 2012, accessed June 7, 2024, https://salzburg.orf.at/v2/news/stories/2552453/.
[86] Archiv und Bibliothek des DAV, München and Archiv des OeAV, Innsbruck. 2012. p.10
[87] Archiv und Bibliothek des DAV, München and Archiv des OeAV, Innsbruck. 2012. p.10

podcasts[88] centering the perspective of marginalized groups[89] that faced exclusion in the past. The German Alpenverein is also responsible for the curation of the Alpines Museum Munich. A new exhibition space was opened on 11 March 2024, featuring the latest research into the history of the association. A core theme of the exhibition is the community-creating effect of alpinism: by engaging with the history of exclusion in the association, the Alpenverein is seeking to build a more inclusive community in the mountain sports scene[90].

Dokumentation Obersalzberg

The Dokumentation Obersalzberg is an institution that grew out of the pressing question: what to do with the area that used to house the Berghof? The first curated exhibition financed by the State of Bavaria opened its doors to the public in 1999, and by 2021, it was visited by more than three million people.

The current concept was developed based on the realization that the historic place of Hitler's residence garners more interest than what the old exhibition's infrastructure can accommodate. Besides that, the exhibition material also needed revision based on the latest research. Although there are little traces left of war violence in the landscape, the narrative of the exhibition defines Obersalzberg as a perpetrator site (Täterort). One of the main points of the exhibition are the arguments supporting the Täterort status of Obersalzberg.

[88] "Bergpodcast: Die Geschichte des Deutschen Alpenvereins," *Alpenverein.de* (Deutscher Alpenverein eV., October 31, 2019), last modified October 31, 2019, accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.alpenverein.de/artikel/podcast-geschichte-deutscher-alpenverein_f72bfa20-b4d5-4493-9ed5-15d3265d0643.

[89] "Bergpodcast: Geschichten über Pionierinnen am Berg," *Alpenverein.de* (Deutscher Alpenverein eV., March 7, 2019), last modified March 7, 2019, accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.alpenverein.de/artikel/podcast-frauenpower-pionierinnen-am-berg_49706614-5d68-457c-9fcd-881c118e29cf.

[90] Frank Martin Siefarth and Franziska Kučera, "Gemeinschaft," *Alpenverein.de* (Deutscher Alpenverein eV., September 11, 2023), last modified September 11, 2023, accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.alpenverein.de/artikel/gemeinschaft-dauerausstellung-alpines-museum_5f4db1cb-b480-4b4d-aec6-f77f43d6c92a.

The title of the exhibition is "Idyll and Atrocity", and the main narrative contrasts these two concepts in revealing the links between the idyllical mountain landscape of Obersalzberg and the atrocities committed by the Nazi regime. The narrative of the exhibition maintains that Obersalzberg is inseparable from the crimes of the regime and cannot be regarded as an apolitical space. In fact, the depoliticization of Obersalzberg was a conscious tactic that the Nazis employed to paint Hitler as a non-violent person and a "good neighbour". The exhibition seeks to analyze and discredit these myths. Several Heinrich Hoffman's pictures are exhibited. Heinrich Hoffman was Hitler's personal photographer, and many of his Obersalzberg images reflect Hitler's image as a domestic man contrasted to a military leader.

The narrative uses several tools to show the interconnectedness of the alpine space and Nazi crimes. The discrepancy between the mountain scenery and the horrors of genocide is highlighted by placing images upon each other with multimedia tools. Another tool is highlighting the temporal simultaneity of historical events by showcasing what was happening at Obersalzberg and other perpetrator sites at the same time. The deconstruction of propaganda narratives involving Obersalzberg is also a central goal of the exhibition. The link between the referenced events and showcased objects is the location: as the introduction of the exhibition concept says, "the story is consistently told from the perspective of the historic location"[91]. At the same time the local context is understood broadly, and the events of other regional centers (like Salzburg and Munich) are presented in the exhibition as well. In the central room of the exhibition, the sites of mass murder are presented, and linked back to the other, local chapters of the exhibition.

Having had the chance to visit the museum twice, I was impressed by the clever use of multimedia, and the unwavering focus on the locality of the institution. A central object is the

[91] Axel Drecoll, Albert Feiber, and Sven Keller, "„Idyll and Atrocity: The New Permanent Exhibition at Dokumentation Obersalzberg". *Vierteljahrshefte Für Zeitgeschichte* 69, no. 1 (2021): 155–165.

digital map that shows the locations of the buildings tied to the Nazi leadership. With the help of this map, visitors are able to locate the past buildings, and learn about their histories. Although very few of them continue to exist today due to the Allied bombing of the area, this is a stark reminder of the specialty and importance of the locality. The use of images – both painted and photographed – is impressive as well. The analysis supported by the visuals breaks down the role of mountain scenery in propaganda, and sheds light on the politicization of nature. The exhibition shows confidence in itself by displaying the kitsch objects such as bearing the imagery of Obersalzberg: with the sufficient contextualization, the presentation of Nazi relics allows educational engagement instead of posing the danger of becoming a Nazi shrine.

Commemorating an escape: the Alpine Peace Crossing

At the end of June, a yearly hike takes place in Krimml near Salzburg, Austria since 2007. The event commemorates the migration of Jewish refugees through the mountains, who fled from antisemitism that was still rampant after the end of the war[92]. The narrative therefore centers the experience of Jews and highlights the relationship of the historical moment to mountaineering culture. By completing the hike, participants step into the shoes of the refugees: they sympathize with the experiences of the group that was previously excluded from the mountain space. It is also important to note that the hike was inspired by the 1947 Jewish migration from Europe to Palestine: therefore, the event highlights the presence of post-war exclusionary tendencies, comparing it to the contemporary obstacles faced by refugees coming to Austria[93].

[92] „APC Hike". on *Alpinepeacecrossing.org*. Accessed June 7, 2024. https://alpinepeacecrossing.org/en/apc-peace-hike/.
[93] „Refugees 1947 and 2007" on *Alpinepeacecrossing.org*. https://alpinepeacecrossing.org/en/refugees-1947-and-2007/

The NGO „Verein für aktive Gedenk- und Erinnerungskultur – Alpine Peace Crossing" that organizes the hike also publishes an annual magazine, in which they call attention to the necessary improvements for greater inclusion in the alpine space[94].

[94] „1/20 The Dark Side of the Alps: Antisemitism then and now" on *Alpinepeacecrossing.org*. https://alpinepeacecrossing.org/en/1-20-the-dark-side-of-the-alps-antisemitism-then-and-now/

CASE STUDY III: The Pietrosz and Transylvania

Introduction

Transylvania, as a mountainous region full of natural wonders has been at the forefront of the Trianon discourse. The region is home to the largest Hungarian-speaking population outside of the borders of Hungary. As a mountainous territory, many of the region's inhabitants rely on the alpine landscape for survival: the Hungarian literary canon contains many stories of the simple, yet honest and fair shepherds of the Carpathian Mountains. Husbandry and mining as dominant industries have largely disappeared, and Transylvania today is known as an attractive holiday destination – in many cases, for "mainland Hungarian" tourists.

In this chapter of the thesis, I explore the concept of Transylvania as a "Hungarian heartland", and as the symbol of the tragical aspect of the Treaty of Trianon. I will consider the regional ethnic struggles, but I will mostly focus on the efforts to retain Transylvania's Hungarian character that stem from mainland Hungary. I will direct the focus on the mountain landscape: I will explore the revisionist rhetoric in relation to the mountains. In terms of the efforts to retain the Hungarian character of the territory, I will consider the plans for the 1948 Olympics in Borsafüred. The main focus will be directed to the Pietrosz/Pietrosul mountain, at the foot of which the Olympic facilities were built.

The mountain with many names: Vârful Pietrosul / Nagy-Pietrosz / Horthy-csúcs

The Pietrosul / Nagy-Pietrosz peak is the highest of the Rodna / Radnai mountain range in the Maramureș province of Transylvania. At 2303 meters, it is an easier undertaking than the previous two peaks considered in this thesis. The peak bore several names in the past century.

Before the '40s, the mountain's Hungarian name was Köves-havas (Rocky Peak, "havas" being a Transylvanian substitute for the word "csúcs"). However, on the official Austro-Hungarian maps, and presumably in colloquial speech, it was most often referred to as Vârful Pietrosul,

also meaning Rocky Peak in Romanian. Therefore, the name "Pietrosz" was widely used in Hungarian maps and papers as well[95].

After Northern Transylvania was re-attached to the Kingdom of Hungary in 1940, Lajos Papp, a frequent contributor made suggestions in an article of the "Turisták Lapja" (Tourist Paper) on how to reclaim the regained territories[96]. His list contained the renaming of places similar to the Prontuario in South Tyrol. "Let us suggest Hungarian names for all geographical phenomena and natural treasures that so far appeared on our maps [with a name] in a foreign language"[97], he wrote. "Understanding, patience, and desirable cooperation with nationalities cannot result in Hungarian riches not having Hungarian names on Hungarian soil!" Building up on this idea, dr. Gyula Peitler suggested in another article titled "New Hungarian geography"[98] to rename the Pietrosul to "Horthy-csúcs" in the honour of Admiral Horthy, whom he hailed as the "land-expanding governor".

Peitler refers to Zsolt Harsányi[99], who cites the usage of the Romanian name of the mountain as evidence of the Hungarian Kingdom's tolerance of its minorities, and argues, that while the immediate surroundings of the mountain may be populated by Romanian peasants, it is originally a Hungarian mountain:

> *Never in a thousand years did it occur to us to rename the Nagy-Pietrosz. In the region of the mountain peak resides Romanian peasantry, that gave the name of the peak. It is fine, we left it at that. However, the primacy of the [Hungarian] name*

[95] In the article „Uj magyar földrajz" (New Hungarian Geography), dr. Gyula Peitler gives a brief explanation to the non-Hungarian place names on Hungarian maps. As he writes, maps were usually made by Austrian civil servants, and they collected place names by asking the locals. Hence why the Pietrosz was given a Romanian name. Gyula Peitler dr., "Uj Magyar földrajz" in *Turisták Lapja*, September 1940 (Volume 52 Issue 9). Accessed in the Arcanum Digital Archive

[96] Lajos Papp, „Erdélyi feladatok" in *Turisták Lapja*, September 1940 (Volume 52 Issue 9). Accessed in the Arcanum Digital Archive

[97] Papp, *Erdélyi feladatok*, 202

[98] Peitler dr. *Uj magyar földrajz,* 221

[99] Peitler presumably refers to Zsolt Harsányi, a popular novelist and journalist in the interwar period. However, the text does not give proper credit tot he original author, therefore, it was not possible to reconstruct the original place of publication. Peitler, dr. *Uj magyar földrajz*, 221

has to be pronounced. The base of the mountain was Hungarian before it was Romanian. Our conqueror elders must have given the peak a Hungarian name. But that Hungarian name died out because of the generosity, that was always patiently shown towards infiltrating nationalities, and which, as it is now obvious, was a noble, but frivolous [way to act]. The Romanian peasant is a native Romanian speaker, we do not doubt that. The state wants to leave him the right to his native language, so it will grant [that right]. But, if I may make a remark, that mountain is not Romanian. That mountain is a Hungarian mountain. And it has the right to only one language: Hungarian.

Similarly, Peitler argues, that the renaming of natural landmarks should not only happen in the interest of the editorial staff, or the Hungarian Tourist Association, that published the paper, but in the interest of the whole of Hungarian society[100].

The birth of the "Trianon-cult"

As Zeidler[101] writes, symbolism is a tool to mobilize the masses. "Political myths" consisting of symbols are "personalised collective desires" that grow into elaborate constructions. The loss of land due to the Treaty of Trianon is such a political symbol in Hungary; arguably with one of the strongest emotional effects in a wide segment of Hungarian society.

As Zeidler[102] argues, memorials in public spaces rely on even more simplified symbolism than other forms of propaganda. Since the commission of statues and memorials is a costly undertaking, these objects have to remain "up to date" over a long period of time: for that, the symbols that they operate with must be rough and generalised, so that they do not lose meaning shortly after their inauguration.

Interestingly, none of the major memorials and statues of Trianon operated with the symbolism of mountains between the World Wars. They mostly utilised religious allegories to depict the

[100] Peitler, dr. 1940. p.221
[101] Zeidler Miklós, *A magyar irredenta kultusz a két világháború között*, (Teleki László Alapítvány, 2002). 8-9.
[102] Zeidler, *A magyar irredenta kultusz a két világháború között,* 16.

Christ-like suffering of the Hungarian nation. The first memorial that utilised land as a symbol of what was lost was the Country Flag with Relics (Ereklyés Országzászló) inaugurated at the Liberty Square in 1928. The crucial part of this structure were the pieces of rocks and soil placed in the reliquary at the foot of the flagpole. The "relics" were collected from parts of post-Trianon Hungary, Croatia, the birthplaces of historical figures who became national symbols, and from battlefields of special importance[103]. This memorial was the first to highlight land as a sacred concept (as a relic), and as the symbol of nationhood.

"*Give me back my mountains!*": mountains as a conceptualisation of Transylvania

A popular reference to the mountain landscape of Transylvania can be found in the "Erdély-induló" (Transylvania March) composed in 1940 upon the re-attachment of Northern Transylvania[104]. The lyrics refers to the Carpathians as ancient ridges that await the return of the Hungarian army. Here, the "ancient ridges" represent the whole land as well as its Hungarian population. The mountain landscape is a convenient symbol for the whole of Northern Transylvania. The lyrics does not need to describe the whole land mass when the mention of ridges already specifies the topic. The mountains are also become a symbol for the people who await the Hungarian army.

Popular catchphrases opposing the peace treaty were created right after the new laws took effect in 1920, and they are still in use today. The slogans "Nem! Nem! Soha!" (No! No! Never!) or "Mindent vissza!" ([Give] everything back!) were popularised in the interwar period[105]. Anti-Trianon buzzwords were later joined by "Adjátok vissza a hegyeimet!" (Give me back my mountains!) after the release of Albert Wass's novel of the same title in 1949[106]. Perhaps the

[103] Zeidler, *A magyar irredenta kultusz a két világháború között,* 21.
[104] Ablonczy Balázs, *A visszatért Erdély: 1940-1944*. (Jaffa Kiadó,2017). 66.
[105] Zeidler, *A magyar irredenta kultusz a két világháború között,* 11.
[106] Wass, Albert. 1949. „Adjátok vissza a hegyeimet!". Hungária, Bad Wörishofen

first monologue of the book, that interchanges the whole of Transylvania to "the mountains" was the first work that put the Carpathians into the focus of irredentist[107] sentiments.

Albert Wass is a controversial author in the Hungarian literary canon: his works are praised on the political right as educational works that radiate patriotism, while he is criticised by more liberal-leaning readers as overtly nationalistic. A good illustration of the debate on Wass's nationalistic conviction is the question whether his works should be among the compulsory readings in the Hungarian Nemzeti Alaptanterv (National Basic Educational Plan). The works of Wass were featured in literature education books in the earlier years, however, teachers were given the liberty whether to choose his novels as compulsory readings or not. Therefore, it was possible to have Wass as a compulsory reading in high schools depending on the teacher's decision[108]. In the 2020 revision of the Nemzeti Alaptanterv, "Give me back my mountains" was finally included among the compulsory readings, making it mandatory for literature teachers to teach about Wass and his work[109].

The novel "Give me back my mountains!" is a retelling of a Transylvanian-Hungarian young man's life from the '30s until the after-war period. Wass writes in a first-person perspective, and while we learn many details of the protagonist, we do not know his name – the protagonist could be virtually anyone, and this way, he becomes an allegory for the community of Transylvanian-Hungarians, who experience the historical events of the novel. The beginning

[107] A distinction must be made between irredentist and revisionist sentiments. Irredentism, as we have seen in the case of South Tyrol and the Trentino, aims for the takeover of another national sovereignty over the territory in question (in this case, the argument is made for Hungary to reclaim Transylvania). Revisionism, on the other hand, argues for the revision of the decisions that detached territories from Hungary. In many cases, it is difficult to draw the line between the two positions. However, as Zeidler writes, Hungarian foreign politics between the World Wars was revisionist in character, but domestic propaganda echoed irredentist sentiments. Since in this thesis, I am considering Trianon symbolism, that often originates from interwar propaganda, most of the symbols considered are more irredentist than revisionist.

[108] As I finished my secondary education in a well-known liberal high school in Budapest, I was never taught about Wass. However, some of my peers who were educated in more conservative-leaning schools, Wass was already a compulsory reading.

[109] Magyarországom.hu, "Wass Albert műve bekerült a kötelező olvasmányok közé – Itt az új NAT," *magyarorszagom.hu*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.magyarorszagom.hu/nat-2020.html.

monologue sets a clearly nationalist tone: the storyteller argues, that the Carpathian mountains belong to him, as he belongs to the mountains. He describes the decision to attach Transylvania to Romania as a breach of the natural order, and as he argues, it is the responsibility of world leaders to restore the order by re-attaching Transylvania to Hungary.

Surprisingly, in the later chapters, Wass paints a more nuanced picture of the ethnic relations of Transylvania, and the nationalistic convictions of the population. The protagonist defends his Romanian brother-in-law from his brother's critique. He struggles with his role as a soldier, but ultimately accepts his violent role as a sacrifice for his homeland. Later, he is shocked to hear, that the war is doomed to fail, for it was "started for the wrong reasons" by the Germans. However, in the dialogue with another soldier, they conclude, that in a dirty war, the "greater evil" – that is, Soviet communism – will win over the lesser evil – the alliance with Nazi Germany. Ultimately, the novel collides many ideological viewpoints, while also remaining sympathetic towards the characters. The only truth, that the protagonist is certain of by the end of the novel is that the land belongs to him, and that the world has responsibility in returning it to its rightful owner.

Although Wass does not shy away from describing the multiple ethnicities residing in Transylvania, he makes no mention of the Holocaust. The deportation of Jews from Northern Transylvania was organised and completed during the years of its re-attachment to Hungary. In such close-knit communities as the one described by Wass, such large-scale discrimination and ethnic cleansing would have been impossible to miss: however, Wass's protagonist conveniently turns a blind eye on Jewish suffering.

Trianon for the alpinists: coping with the loss

For the Hungarian mountain sports community, Trianon was a tangible, practical tragedy: the Kingdom of Hungary lost all its high mountain ranges. From the newspapers of mountain sport associations echoes a quiet resignation. A 1928 account of a climb to the Grossglockner paints

a fractured picture of the Hungarian alpinist community[110]. The author divides the Hungarian hikers he encountered into two groups: tourists, and "tourists". For him, real tourists are educated in the dangers of mountaineering, and do not use mechanic assistance to climb the mountain, while "tourists" (with the quotation marks) are unprepared for their quest and use modern inventions to get to the peak. With that, he draws the line between these groups not based on nationality, but on the basis of climbing achievements. The loss of the Tatras at Trianon is mentioned in a dismal tone. However, the ultimate solution he offers to "tourists" who want to become real tourists is to familiarise themselves with the remaining lower mountain ranges of Hungary. His approach to Trianon is rather pragmatic: although he laments the loss of high mountain ranges, he praises the beauty of the remaining, lower mountains, and suggests, that these destinations require more touristic attention. Only if the tourist learns the basics of alpinism in the homeland can they set foot in more spectacular destinations, like the Alps.

For the Hungarian mountaineering community, the Alps became a substitute of the lost mountain ranges. A reader's letter in a 1935 issue of Magyar Turista Élet (Hungarian Tourist Life) laments the tendency of the newspaper to feature foreign destinations[111]. As the author writes, the 1933 volume of the newspaper contains 65 articles, out of which 23 are travel descriptions. 14 of these are "propagating" foreign destinations, while domestic hikes are described in 5, and only 4 deal with the "occupied territories".

Ultimately, Hungarian alpinist associations lamented Trianon, but lacked the organisational, financial and social means to noticeably protest it. Unlike the Austrian Alpenverein, the Hungarian mountaineering community did not issue any unified boycotts or patron projects. Some saw the opportunity to direct the attention to the remaining natural wonders of Hungary.

[110] Sándor Dobiecki dr, „Turisták és „turisták""in *Turistaság és Alpinizmus* 1 March 1928 (Volume 18 Issue 3). Accessed in the Arcanum Digital Archive

[111] Magyar Turista Élet, „Ismerjük meg hazánk földjét" in *Magyar Turista Élet* 30 March 1935 (Volume 3 Issue 6). Accessed in the Arcanum Digital Archive

Tibor Zsitvay, the president of the Hungarian Tourist Association gave a speech in the Parliament about the issues faced by his organization[112]. He lamented the encirclement of land for hunting purposes. He argued, that there were positive effects of Trianon by boosting tourist activity in the lower mountain ranges, and that these activities are threatened by hunting:

> *"They said at the time, after Trianon, that Hungarian tourism had lost ground, we had lost our mountains, there was nothing left for us, but the bottom of a plate. But the tourist movement began with such great, elemental force that was never seen before after Trianon. Today, after 15 years of exploration work, I can say, and all tourism experts can say with me, that in this truncated country there are beautiful natural places that deserve the attention of the whole world […]"*

Therefore, the approach of Hungarian alpinists to Trianon was pragmatic, and aligned with the revisionist tactic of the government. Trianon was lamented in words, but rarely in actions: Hungarian alpinists simply opted to visit the Alps or explore the remaining lower mountain ranges of the country. This inaction may be a result of the fractured Hungarian mountain sports scene, that failed to give a unified answer to the secession of mountain ranges as the German-Austrian Alpenverein did in the case of South Tyrol. Another explanation can be the contemporary political approach: although most of the population was united in the disappointment with the Treaty, politicians did not take radical action against it.

Antisemitism among Hungarian alpinists

The Magyar Turista Szövetség (Hungarian Tourist Union) was created in 1913 to unify mountain sports associations across Hungary, and to mediate the clashes between the different organisations' interests. Its relationship with its member organisations was never without issues: as Vuray writes[113], in the Magyar Turista Egylet (Hungarian Tourist Association - MTSZ),

[112] Magyar Turista Élet, „Zsitvay Tibor hatalmas parlamenti beszéde a turistaság védelmében" in *Magyar Turista Élet* 1934 December (Volume 2 Issue 21-22). Accessed in the Arcanum Digital Archive
[113] Vuray, György. unknown date. „Az MTE története". website of the Magyar Turista Egyesület. Accessed in 2024. https://magyarturistaegyesulet.hu/az-mte-tortenete/

rumours said that "the Union needs the Association more, than the Association needs the Union". The MTSZ did not give a unified answer to Trianon; on the contrary, it disqualified the Erdélyi Kárpát Egyesület upon the return of Transylvania, since they failed to pay the membership fee. The MTSZ was not an organic union of smaller chapters, such as the Alpenverein, but rather an attempt to stop the quarrelling of the member organisations. It did not hold on for long – along with other mountain sport associations, it was disbanded in 1945.

In 1941, the newspaper of MTSZ – Magyar Turista Élet (Hungarian Tourist Life) began to issue short articles, in which they explain, that Jewish members will not be able to renew their memberships[114]. The articles refer to the decisions of the Országos Sport Központ (National Sport Centre), the legal successor of the Országos Testnevelési Tanács (National Physical Education Council) – a governmental organisation overseeing sports activities and organisations. Therefore, it is plausible, that the MTSZ did not decide to ban Jews from its ranks. There are no antisemitic agitations on the pages of the Magyar Turista Élet – instead, there seems to be widespread confusion on who is affected by the decision. In 1942[115], the paper reports:

> *"On the question of the verification of Jewish tourists, confusion arose after the presentation of the planned proposal of the National Sports Committee at the meeting of the associate counsellors in December. Neither the Union (MTSZ) nor the member organizations knew for sure what to do about the assignment."*

In the same article, they conclude that for one more year, the final decision on how to incorporate the regulation will be postponed to the next year. In the next issue of the newspaper, there is even wider confusion regarding anti-Jewish laws that forbid non-Jewish participants

[114] Magyar Turista Élet. 1941. „Két pengő lesz a szövetségi igazolás". Magyar Turista Élet 1941 December (Volume 9 Issue 22). p. 2. Accessed on Arcanum Digital Archive

[115] Magyar Turista Élet, „Minden turistaegyesületi tag kiválthatja szövetségi igazolványát"in *Magyar Turista Élet* 30 January 1942 (Volume 10 Issue 2). Accessed in the Arcanum Digital Archive

with a Jewish spouse. As the report states, multiple organisations were planning to appeal the decision.

These articles do not presume the lack of antisemitism among Hungarian mountain sports associations; rather, they demonstrate the lack of unification and the inability to bring clearly communicated decisions. However, comparing the approach of the Austrian Alpenverein, it can be stated that, in Hungarian alpinist associations, Jew-free mountaineering was not a question of identity – it was rather a byproduct of their time.

Reclaiming Transylvania via tourism

The baptism of the Pietrosz as Horthy-csúcs was one of the ways of reclaiming Northern Transylvania as Hungarian. The re-attached territories were given to the Kingdom of Hungary in the 2nd Vienna Awards. Teleki, the Hungarian Prime Minister argued for the re-attachment of Transylvania to Hungary on several grounds. One of the main points of his reasoning was the "natural border" constructed by the Carpathians: as he argued, it was Europe's best interest to re-attach Transylvania to Hungary, for only the mountains could hold back a possible Soviet-Russian invasion[116].

With the 2nd Vienna Awards, the efforts to reclaim Transylvania began. As Ablonczy[117] writes, tourism and sports as means of reclaiming Northern Transylvania are an under-researched but important facet of the history of the territory. He notes that the numerous guidebooks issued by the Országos Magyar Idegenforgalmi Hivatal (National Hungarian Tourism Office) all described Transylvania as a thoroughly Hungarian territory, barely mentioning the presence of other nationalities (Jews and Romanians). Transylvania was dubbed as an "ancient ground" of Hungarians, where a visit is not simply a holiday, but a "national pilgrimage".

[116] Ablonczy, *A visszatért Erdély: 1940-1944,* 36-37.
[117] Ablonczy, *A visszatért Erdély: 1940-1944,* 189.

The Hungarian reclamation of the land only worked with the exclusion of other nationalities. The Erdélyi Kárpát Egyesület was banned from the Magyar Turista Szövetség, as it failed to pay its membership fees. It was re-admitted in 1941, only after stripping all its Jewish members from their memberships[118]. With elaborate legal mechanisms, Romanian property owners were forced to rent their property to Hungarian tenants. Much effort was put into stripping local Jews from their property by revoking their business licenses[119]. Tourism boomed due to the numerous policies of the Hungarian National Tourist Office. However, as Ablonczy argues, the image of Transylvania propagated via guidebooks and travel agencies was false: it was the "illusion of an ethnically homogenous Transylvania", devoid of Jewish, Romanian, and German inhabitants[120].

Olympic complex at the foot of the Horthy-csúcs

The preparations for the 1948 Winter Olympic Games also mobilised the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. The National Hungarian Tourism Office had already supported the construction of skying slopes in the mountains of Transylvania, and the plans for the arrangement for a Hungarian Olympics were ripe[121]. Associates of the Hungarian Ski Association decided, that the Horthy-csúcs would be the most suitable for the plan: they were most likely inspired by the 1936 Winter Olympics organised in Garmisch-Partenkirchen, at the foot of Germany's highest mountain. However, the land where some of the constructions were planned were owned by Romanian and Jewish landowners, who refused to sell their property for less than the market price. The Ski Association asked for the help of local governor (főispán) Fláviusz Jurka and his second-in-command dr. Béla Dudinszky, and shortly after, the community of Borsa donated the land to the association[122].

[118] Ablonczy, *A visszatért Erdély: 1940-1944,* 192-193.
[119] Ablonczy, *A visszatért Erdély: 1940-1944,* 196-200.
[120] Ablonczy, *A visszatért Erdély: 1940-1944,* 200.
[121] Killyéni András-Péter, *Olimpiai álom a Radnai-havasokban*, (Magyar Napló, 2015). 17-19.
[122] Killyéni, *Olimpiai álom a Radnai-havasokban*, 69.

The sport hotel "Hóvirág" (Edelweiß) was built on the appropriated land in 1944, where competitors resided during the races. By this point, Borsafüred, an outset of the town of Borsa, had seen the construction of numerous mountain huts. Perhaps the most famous of them was the "Anikó" hut, named after the successful skiing competitor Anikó Iglóiné Eleőd, who was also the wife of the vice-president of the Hungarian Ski Club. He generously supported the construction of the hut[123]. The "Bors Vezér szálló" (Hotel Bors Vezér) in the same area was built by the Magyar Országos Véderő Egyesület (Hungarian National Defense Union)[124], a far-right paramilitary organisation led by Gyula Gömbös, the Prime Minister of the Horthy-regime. Between 1941 and 1944, numerous ski competitions were conducted on the slopes, and the area was under constant development for the Olympics – although the Hungarian Olympic Commission never got official approval of the right to organise the 1948 Olympics. In 1944, the ski resort was vacated, and the Anikó hut was burnt down. The Bors Vezér hut functioned as a school for some time after the communist takeover in Romania, while the Hóvirág hut was further utilised as a hotel. The fate of the Bors Vezér hut is unclear, however, the Hóvirág hut still stands, although it is currently deserted, and in a poor condition[125].

Trianon: a heavier trauma?

The place and nature of the Trianon-trauma in the Hungarian historical canon is the topic of emotionally and politically charged debate. A reason for this is the interconnectedness of the memory of Trianon and the Holocaust. This problem was first articulated in the Gerő-Romsics debate – often dubbed the "Hungarian Historikerstreit" – in 2012. First, the debate was centred around antisemitism, as András Gerő, a historian of 19th century Jewish assimilation and

[123] Killyéni, *Olimpiai álom a Radnai-havasokban*, 53-67.
[124] Killyéni, *Olimpiai álom a Radnai-havasokban*, 50.
[125] János Szántai, "A nem titkos csoda, amikor Magyarország kicsit visszakapta a hegyeit," *Foter.ro*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://foter.ro/cikk/a-nem-titkos-csoda-amikor-magyarorszag-kicsit-visszakapta-a-hegyeit/.

contemporary antisemitism accused Ignác Romsics, a historian of 20th century Hungarian history of using antisemitic arguments in his works and speeches. The accusation was made in a political climate, where, as Rigó writes, "official collective memory and "grassroots" memorialization, supported by popular historical magazines, seemed to be putting the Horthy era on a pedestal as a kind of usable past for contemporary Hungary"[126]. The ensuing debate with over one hundred participants extended to the memory of Trianon, the evaluation of the Horthy regime, and the frequent emission of the Holocaust-trauma from the "Hungarian" historical narrative.

The article that "hit the nail in the head" the most was Gábor Gyáni's "Trianon versus Holocaust" in the left-leaning intellectual paper Élet és Irodalom[127]. The core of the dissonant narrative of Trianon and the Holocaust, as Gyányi writes, is the lack of social consensus, that Jews should be included in the Hungarian historical canon. As he writes, "To this day, there is no agreement that says: "The memory of non-Jewish Hungarians is only complete together with that of Hungarian Jews"." He cites the tradition of religious differences as the reason why Jews continued to be labelled as non-Hungarian, therefore, their trauma would not be regarded as Hungarian, but Jewish trauma. He admits that the inclusion of historical events where the majority segment of society can only be regarded as the perpetrator or bystander at best, is a difficult task. He also cites Germany as a positive example, with the Holocaust becoming a cornerstone of the remade German identity post-WWII. Although these statements could be criticised, Gyányi's identification of the Jewish-Hungarian alienation and divide as the reason for the dismissal of the Holocaust as a "trauma-drama" (despite official efforts to create a lieux

[126] Máté Rigó, *„A Hungarian Version of the Historikerstreit? A Summary of the Romsics-Gerő Debate among Hungarian Historians". Cultures of History Forum*, 2013. 3.
[127] Gábor Gyáni, "Trianon versus holokauszt," *ES.hu* (Élet és Irodalom, August 10, 2012), last modified August 10, 2012, accessed June 7, 2024, https://www.es.hu/cikk/2012-08-10/gyani-gabor/trianon-versus-holokauszt.html.

de mémoire of it) explains the dynamics of the contemporary public sphere regarding the memory of Trianon and the Holocaust.

As Gyányi writes, the memory of Trianon and the Holocaust both award victim status to those who have suffered through them[128]. The victim status of the two groups is exclusive, and they often accuse the other group of perpetrating their historical traumas. Analysing this dissonance, Gyányi paints a pessimistic picture: he argues, that there is a small chance that the Holocaust could become an intensive trauma-drama in the Hungarian society, and this role in collective memory will be filled with the Trianon-cult.

With that, the identification with Trianon as the primary trauma of Hungary can be interpreted as a rejection of the Holocaust. When choosing between the two narratives, one chooses their identity: Trianon is commemorated by the "true Hungarians", while the Holocaust is the tragedy of "the Jews and their supporters".

The survival of the illusion of ethnic Hungarian Transylvania

Throughout my research, multiple scholars and members of mountain sports associations recommended András-Péter Killyéni's book "Olimpiai álom a Radnai-havasokban" (Olympic dream in the Rodna Mountains)[129]. I intended to use this publication as a background literature to this chapter, however, its subscription to the idea of Transylvania as an ethnically homogenous Hungarian territory makes it worthy of examination as a research object.

Outside of a few hurried explanations of the larger historical context, the book avoids discussing the Hungarian responsibility for the events of World War II. The Hungarian involvement in the war and Transylvania's repeated secession in its aftermath are described as unavoidable turns of fate rather than the consequences of political decisions. The narrative subscribes to the

[128] Gyáni, „Trianon versus holokauszt"
[129] Killyéni, *Olimpiai álom a Radnai-havasokban*.

illusion of an ethnically homogenous Hungarian Transylvania described earlier by Ablonczy: while the cooperation of "mainland Hungarian" and Transylvanian Hungarian mountain sports enthusiasts is highlighted, the perspective of the local Romanian and Jewish population is entirely absent. Romanian and Jewish landowners are mentioned in the book only once, in relation to the land donation affair during the construction of the Hóvirág hut[130].

Killyéni is aware of the controversial nature of his research, and he tries to "wash" his protagonists clean: he highlights one instance several times, when members of the Hungarian skiing community hid a Polish ski coach, who had escaped the Nazi occupation of German[131]. At the same time, Killyényi does not elaborate on the biographies of the numerous subjects of his research, who emigrated to South America after the war. In two instances, he writes that the described people were "accused of committing war crimes", or "ended up on the list of war criminals", questioning the validity of their verdict[132].

Killyéni's study of the construction of the Olympic complex is ripe with nostalgia for the glorious age of Hungarian mountain sports. The narrative avoids a critical engagement with the historical context and does not examine the nationalist exploitation of the mountain sports scene. With that, the publication becomes a contemporary continuation of the illusion of Transylvania as an inherently Hungarian territory. The book's popularity in the contemporary mountain sports scene is also telling: by hailing this publication as a much needed and accurate study, the associations subscribe to the illusory narrative.

The Hazajáró Egylet

The Hazajáró Honismereti és Turista Egylet ("Homegoer" Association for National Consciousness and Tourism) is an interesting case study of the intersection of politics, history

[130] Killyéni, *Olimpiai álom a Radnai-havasokban*, 69.
[131] Killyéni, *Olimpiai álom a Radnai-havasokban*, 71-73.
[132] Killyéni, *Olimpiai álom a Radnai-havasokban*, 35 and 57.

and alpinism. The association grew out of the Hazajáró TV-series broadcasted on Duna Televízió (one of the state-owned channels) since 2011. The aim of the series is to introduce the territories formerly belonging to the Kingdom of Hungary, and that seceded after World War I. Many of these territories continue to house Hungarian-speaking minorities: the series also aims to explore their way of life while also popularising hiking and outdoor activities. These goals may initially sound apolitical, however, the execution of the series suggest otherwise: there is little unbiased exploration of the nature or the ethnographical realities of the territories, and the focus is mainly on a one-sided narrative detailing the horror and struggle of the secession of these territories for the Hungarian people.

An episode on the Rodna Mountains[133] is a prime example to the nationalist narrative of the series. The narration begins with an uncontextualized excerpt from the '40s, referring to the highest peak of the range as Horthy-csúcs and a part of Hungary. For a few minutes, the unaware viewer would think that the name is still in effect, and that the territory is indeed enclosed in the present borders of the Hungarian state. The mountain is framed as "eternal", above politics, remaining the same over time (presumably "Hungarian" – there is no discussion on the problems of assigning nationalities to a natural phenomenon). The plot follows a group of exclusively Hungarian male hikers on a journey to the Nagy-Pietrosz. There is little discussion on the local culture, other than it being Hungarian. The importance of the area for Hungarian identity is further emphasised by the detailed exploration of the 1944 incident, when a group of 16 levente were swept away by an avalanche. Only one of them survived, and commemoration efforts were hindered by the political turmoil of the 20th century. The tragedy is not framed as a simple mountaineering accident, but as a national tragedy, where patriotic youth perished in their conquest for a national symbol.

[133] Zoltán Moys, *Radnai-Havasok – A Kárpáti Várfal Keleti Őrbástyája* (Duna TV, 2013), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=U_wrN8OOmX8.

According to the documentation of the incident, the Levente group was hardly unprepared for the challenge[134]. The team consisted of members of the Salgótarjáni Acélgyári Levente Testedző Egyesület (Salgótarján Steel Factory Levente Physical Education Association). Several members had already climbed the Horthy peak in the summertime, and the instructors of the team had previously led two successful expeditions to the peak during the winter. Therefore, the accident can be regarded as a result of misfortune.

In 2003, a traditional wooden "kopjafa" (funeral stele) was erected to commemorate the tragedy. While the sign on the structure says it was erected to represent the commemorative efforts of the city of Salgótarján, it is unclear who commissioned, financed and built the memorial[135]. The wording of the sign on the structure does not make explicit mention of the patriotic goals of the group, however, most online sources hail the expedition as an effort to bring glory to the Hungarian nation. At the same time, the choice of the kopjafa highlights the Hungarian origin of the victims. However, as a symbol, the kopjafa is understood only by members of the Hungarian community, or those, who have a large background knowledge regarding Hungarian ethnography.

The episode also features Varga Csaba, a Romanian-born Hungarian mountaineer often associated with the events of the Hazajáró Egylet.

In the episode, he talks about the various names of the peak "as a local", (although Nagyvárad is about 250 kilometres away from the Pietrosz), and concludes: "for us, Hungarians, it was, is, and will remain Horthy-csúcs." (It is worth noting that the peak was named Horthy-csúcs only between 1941 and 1944.)

[134] "Salgótarjáni leventék hősi halála," *Magyar Nemzeti Levéltár*, last modified February 1, 2019, accessed June 7, 2024, https://mnl.gov.hu/mnl/nml/salgotarjani_leventek_hosi_halala.
[135] Péter Budai, "Nagy-Pietrosz," *Radnai Havasok*, accessed June 7, 2024, http://www.radnaihavasok.ro/pietrosz.

The Hazajáró Egylet organises hikes across the Carpathian basin. The domestic hikes are usually memorial hikes that commemorate nationalist actors: military units, or controversial members of the Horthy-regime's administration[136]. The hikes organised outside of Hungary's borders lead to former Hungarian territories. In these cases, even if the hike does not commemorate a specific historical figure, it becomes a memorial act, commemorating the loss of the concerned territory. The Hazajáró makes annual visits to the Rodna Mountains, however, the events do not always centre the Pietrosz (they organised a hike to the Pietrosz in 2021[137]).

In the past couple years, the Hazajáró Egylet gained favour with the Hungarian government: in 2023, they received touristic support funds for the construction of a mountain hut on the Dobogókő mountain near Budapest, as well as financial support from the Bethlen Gábor Fund Management belonging under the Prime Minister's Office (Miniszterelnökség)[138].

Varga Csaba: Climbing for the nation

Varga was born in the primarily Romanian-speaking town of Belényes/Beius in 1982. He currently resides in Nagyvárad/Orodea and works as an architect. He is currently dubbed as the "most successful living Hungarian mountaineer", as he summited six 8000-ers without the use of supplemental oxygen[139].

[136] Some of the hikes commemorate members of the Horthy-administration: Pál Teleki, Gábor Bethlen, and Horthy himself. Other hikes commemorate military units, like Border Guard Unit 32 (32-es határvadászok), who guarded Transylvania from the Red Army during World War II. Source: Events on the web page of the Hazajáró Egylet. https://hazajaroegylet.hu/esemenynaptar/

[137] „VIII. Radnai-havasok túra", *Hazajaroegylet.hu*, accessed June 7, 2024, https://hazajaroegylet.hu/esemeny/viii-radnai-havasok-tura/.

[138] Tamás Mázsár. „Állami támogatásból vett dobogókői telket a Kitörés túra szervezője, de senki sem árulja el, hol épül fel a turistaház", *24.Hu*. Accessed June 7, 2024. https://24.hu/kozelet/2023/10/31/hazajaro-honismereti-es-turista-egylet-egyesulet-kitores-tura-allami-tamogatas-bethlen-gabor-alapkezelo-moys-zoltan-dobogoko-turistahaz/?fbclid=IwAR1pnCHRDev1Upqq5XnaLff4gS5o9I6tUsVYbTcQHCRnyvRjQ5J7ZdcughE.

[139] Among Hungarian climbers, the Transylvanian Zsolt Erőss was the most successful by summiting ten 8000ers, most of them without supplemental oxygen, and a prosthetic leg. He died on his descent from Kangchenjunga in 2013.

Varga is known for his patriotic motivation that he likes to express while climbing. When summiting a peak, he takes photographs with a Hungarian flag that has the name of his Transylvanian city, Nagyvárad, written in the middle. As he says, his goal with climbing is to inspire "ordinary Hungarians" not to "assimilate", and to remain Hungarian in the Carpathian basin[140]. His statement should be understood in the context of the Hungarian diaspora outside the borders of Hungary, who constitute a minority in the states of their residence. At the same time, the statement is vague and gives space to different understandings: Varga does not specify whose assimilation efforts need to be resisted by the Hungarian community. With that, he engages in a euphemistic us vs. them rhetoric: he restricts the community he represents to Hungarians only and references non-Hungarians as a threat to Hungarian identity. Therefore, in Varga's rhetoric, we see the continuation of the ethnicity-based inclusion and exclusion in 20th century mountaineering.

The Breakout Memorial Hike

The most famous and controversial event organised by the Hazajáró Egylet is the "Breakout memorial hike" (Kitörés emléktúra, sometimes also called Kitörés 60), commemorating the 1945 breakout attempt of German and Hungarian soldiers from the Buda castle. In February 1945, the German and Hungarian troops tried to break the siege circle of the Red Army from the Buda castle district. The action was controversial from the beginning: Hitler commanded German troops to remain in Budapest, and to turn the city into a bastion protecting the Third Reich. Officers had been discussing a possible breakout attempt for weeks, however, due to the slow proceeding and the conflicting orders, they missed the realistic chance to escape the city without much larger casualties. The single objective of the breakout was the escape of the

[140] Nézőpont, *8000 Méter Fölött a Világ - Varga Csaba Hegymászó a Nézőpontban* (Médiatér, 2022), https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Pk2CP6LxD-4.

troops: it was clear from the beginning, that the breakout would not gain military advantage or hinder the movements of the Red Army.

The breakout began on the 11th of February 1945, and was a great military failure: 20.000 people are believed to have perished in the operation. According to Ungváry, only 800 grave locations are known[141]. Presumably, a large part of the Buda mountain range is littered with bodies from the breakout. In the socialist era, the memory of the breakout was silenced. After the regime change, it emerged in a memory gap, and was successfully appropriated by the German and Hungarian far-right. The twisted narrative turned the soldiers from escapees to patriotic heroes and tragic victims, and the failed military action into a last stand against bolshevism.

Today, there are two main events commemorating the breakout: the Becsület Napja (Day of Honour), and the Kitörés túra (Breakout hike). The two events are organised by different actors and take place separately, however, there is a significant overlap between their ideological backgrounds, and presumably, their attendees.

The first Day of Honour event was organised by the Magyar Nemzeti Arcvonal (Hungarian National Frontline - MNA) in 1997. The MNA defined itself as a "hungarist" neo-fascist movement; the original name was Hungarian National Socialist Action Groups. The founder, István Győrkös was one of the main figures of the millennial Hungarian far-right scene, and currently serves life sentence for the armed murder of a policeman. According to barikád.hu[142], a far-right portal that had since been shut down, the first Day of Honour march took place around the Buda castle and attracted 150 attendees. The first physical fights related to the event happened two years later in a pub. Between 2000 and 2002, the Day of Honour events could not be held, since other (unspecified) organisations reserved the historical spaces of the

[141] Ungváry Krisztián, *Utak a senkiföldjén: Kitörés 1945*. (Jaffa Kiadó, 2021).
[142] „Becsület napja a Hősök terén" on *Barikád.hu / Archive.org*. Accessed June 7, 2024. https://web.archive.org/web/20090605055901/http://barikad.hu/node/11543.

breakout for their own events. Between 2003 and 2006, despite the court decision to disband MNA in the December of 2004. In the timeline, the author mentions the Breakout hike as being held in 2007 for the second time, and from that year, there are no mentions of separate Day of Honour events.

The breakout memorial hike today is organised partly by the Hazajáró Egylet and is a popular far-right event attended by German neo-Nazis and Hungarian far-right groups as well. The hike had been a centre of controversies in the past years. Due to its ideological nature, it attracted protests from both international and domestic far-left and far-right groups. In 2023, anti-fascist protesters attacked attendees of a commemoration event for the breakout, and far-right protesters attacked a group they believed to be anti-fascist[143]. The court cases dealing with the two events are interesting to examine: the Hungarian police has been accused of taking the case of antifascist aggressors more seriously than that of the far-right aggressors[144].

Attending the hike, my superstition was that the attendees mostly join because of the hike itself, since the night hike in the wintertime can be a unique challenge for sport enthusiasts. I turned out to be wrong: most of the attendees seemed to be supporters of nationalist ideologies, judging by their clothing, symbols, and insignia. Many of the hikers spoke German. I spoke to some of them: they came from Saxony and drove 9 hours only to attend the 60-kilometre-long hike for the 4th time. The Hungarian attendees that I talked to arrived from the countryside. Some of them were first-time attendees, but more commonly, they joined the hike for the 3rd or 4th time in a row.

[143] Balázs Bozzay, "Véresre verték őket a szélsőjobbosok a kitörés napján, pedig nem is antifák," *Telex*, last modified February 15, 2023, accessed June 7, 2024, https://telex.hu/belfold/2023/02/15/kitores-napja-veres-gyulolet-tamadas-szelsojobb-betyarsereg-nemzeti-radikalis.
[144] Zsófia Hanga Aradi, "Miért kezeli másképp a jog, ha fasiszták vernek antifasisztákat, mintha fordítva?," *Telex*, last modified February 16, 2023, accessed June 7, 2024, https://telex.hu/belfold/2023/02/16/kitores-napja-gyulolet-buncselekmeny-kozosseg-tagja-elleni-eroszakos-cselekedet-garazdasag.

The people I talked to did not give away their ideological or political convictions, however, judging by their appearance, they were either supportive or at least tolerant of right-wing ideologies. In my estimate, the ratio of average sports clothing and military-inspired clothing was 40%-60%. Most of the military clothing was not historically accurate: it seemed to me that many attendees deemed any kind of military-style clothing appropriate for the event. However, the main reason for my conviction that many of the attendees are supporters of far-right ideologies was the great number of badges and insignia that they wore. They did not contain outright hate symbols, however, many of them referred to the "codes"[145] of far-right movements. The behaviour of the participants was also interesting to examine: at the beginning of the hike, many of German attendees went as far to cover their faces to remain unrecognisable for cameras, perhaps to remain unidentifiable on social media. The attendees were overwhelmingly male, and most of the female hikers I encountered were the part of larger male groups. Most participants were young or middle-aged, and I was surprised by the number of children attending.

The first leg of the hike stretched through the populated areas of Buda: at this part, the hikers were guarded and observed by police. The police that I encountered was very polite and eager to help us as participants of the hike. At one point however, I saw one of the attendees separated from the crowd by police, who wanted to check his replica weapon. He returned quickly and without any further issues.

According to the introduction on the hike's website, the speciality of the hike is the "historically accurate" checkpoints. At the first checkpoint, I was greeted with an organiser in military attire speaking in a "fake Slavic accent" about the paper pass I had to present. Perhaps the organisers had the reenactment of a Soviet military base in mind, but altogether, the scene seemed more

[145] Some insignia resembled the ones found in the ADL database for neo-Nazi symbols: https://www.adl.org/resources/hate-symbols/search?f%5B0%5D=topic%3A1708

comical than historically accurate. Some of the stamps I received at the checkpoints featured hate symbols: both a swastika and the hammer and sickle were included. At one of the checkpoints in the forest, someone hung a swastika flag on a tree. Some participants took pictures with it; however, they were the minority. Most people continued the hike right away, and the queue was moving so quickly that I did not even have time to examine the scene in detail.

The mood during the hike was friendly and welcoming: as soon as the participants believed they were "amongst themselves", they became comfortable and engaged with each other. I was regularly greeted by other hikers with a smile, and participants were seen encouraging each other in difficult sections. Some spoke about the breakout and were trying to track the route that the soldiers took at checkpoints, however, these were a minority among the conversations I overheard. Most talked about everyday matters. Towards the end of the hike, I encountered a group that sang patriotic military songs[146], however, as we were nearing the 20-kilometer mark, and everyone started to tire, they soon stopped. At one of the soldiers' graves along the route, I saw a participant enacting a Nazi salute, however, he continued his way right after, as if he was afraid of possible critics. Altogether, the hike did not feel like an unsafe undertaking as long as I did not reveal my different background. As soon as the participants believed they would be ideologically and politically unchallenged, they became approachable and very friendly on a personal level.

By dressing up in (supposedly) contemporary clothing and following the route of the breakout, participants take on the role of the soldiers who took part in the historical event. While the hike as a memorial practice does not necessarily entail the identification – it could simply be a visit to the graves along the route – the lack of critical engagement, the politically charged narrative,

[146] The only song I recognised was „Szél viszi messze" („The wind blows far"), a military song with unknown origins, sung by the popular far-right militarist band Kárpátia.

and the encouragement of militaristic attire altogether create an ideologically charged, tense atmosphere. Although the decisions of the German and Hungarian military leadership (and by extension, the political elite that maneuvered Hungary into the fateful situation) could be criticised for the failure of the attempt and the resulting loss of life, this opportunity is neglected by both the organisers and the participants. A paradoxical relationship of historical facts and political ideologies ensues: while German and Hungarian military alignment and the Soviet expansion could be made responsible for the tragic loss of life, the blame is instead shifted to left-wing ideology. Soldiers are revered both as victims of bolshevism and heroes of Hungarian and German nationalism. The mention the earlier role of units that participated in the breakout in the ethnic cleansing of the European Jewry is also missing.

With that, the Breakout hike is lively lieu de mémoire exclusively designed by and for members of the contemporary European far-right milieu. There is no opportunity for the presentation of differing and critical interpretations of the events. However, as it was shown by the anachronistic attire of most participants, presumably, factual historical knowledge is also absent on the side of memory actors. The driving force of the commemoration is not a clear and throughout understanding of the complexities of the event, but an implicit consensus of the heroic role of the soldiers defending nationalist ideologies.

Conclusion

Mountains in the late 19th and early 20th centuries became venues of national significance. By taking part in the national struggles of the 20th century – either as symbols of nationalist pursuits or exploitable natural obstacles in battles – the mountain landscape became lieu de mémoire of identity creation, community building, and exclusion. The three venues studied in this thesis all offer different memory landscapes: some are critical of their role in nation-building, while others still constitute a symbol for present nationalism.

Modernisation and anti-modernisation

The nationalist approach to modernity is a recurring theme in the debates among mountaineers of the early 20th century. The populist initiative to open up the peculiar terrain to the masses clashed with the anti-modernist romantic approach of many mountaineers, who wanted to return to a pre-industrial idealised past in the alpine realm.

In South Tyrol, the struggle to maintain national presence in the mountains necessitated constant developments in the Alps. In the Alpine battles of World War I, the mountain landscape became increasingly mechanised for the war effort. At the same time, a shadow war ensued between German and Austrian mountaineering associations, targeting the mountain refuges in the South Tyrolean and Tridentine Alps. In this hostile environment, modernisation was seen as a key to win the nationalist battle for the ownership of the peaks.

At the same time, in the German Alps, attitudes to modernisation were twofold and frequently came into conflict. Hitler famously employed the mountain sublime for the propagation of his domestic image. While the domestic Hitler was fashioned employing traditionalist and down-to-earth imagery, the constructions of his modern Berghof residence were devastating for the traditional local community. The Alpenverein expressed a largely traditionalist approach: nationalist climbers were worried that the modernisation of the alpine sphere would allow non-worthy elements to pollute the mountain landscape.

After the return of Transylvania, the modernisation of the mountains was hailed as a byproduct of national revival. The plans for the Olympic complex at the foot of the Horthy peak disregarded the traditional communities at the foot of the mountain. However, there were virtually no debates on the necessity of modernisation in the Carpathians: the development of tourist infrastructure constituted an important leg of the reclamation efforts of Transylvania.

Territoriality

In the conflicts of 20th century Europe, mountains have been referenced as natural borders: both in the case of South Tyrol and Transylvania, an argument for the secession of the territories from their respective administrative units was the status of the mountain ranges as natural borders.

World War I brought armed struggle to the mountains. In this previously unseen conflict, mountains became an active participant of the clashes: the peculiarities of the alpine terrain were mercilessly exploited by both sides of the combatants. The efforts to physically remove members of the "other" group did not cease with the peace treaties and continued into the interwar period.

Clashes between the Tridentine SAT and the German-Austrian Alpenverein were a spectacular manifestation of nationalist territorial in the alpine landscape. By planting mountain huts in certain areas, both associations tried to assert themselves as the dominant force in the mountains. The disruption of the constructions and land expropriations caused bitter legal and ideological debates that raised the question: which one of the two nations has the right to be present in the Alps?

Similarly, Eduard Pichl in his antisemitic agitation argued that Jews were seeking to invade the Alps like they did to modern urban areas. The displacement of Jews from the alpine landscape was described as a matter of survival for the indigenous German population. The huts owned

by few chapters that allowed Jews – Donauland and Sektion Berlin – were expropriated and transferred to the ownership of German chapters and the Wehrmacht.

Territoriality also showed itself in the debates of place names in contested territories. Fascist leadership in South Tyrol mandated the Italianisation of place names to signify the Italian character of the newly gained territories. Similarly, upon the return of Northern Transylvanian territories, Hungarian alpinists initiated the renaming of places with foreign names. By attaching a nationally appropriate name to a place, these actors were trying to embed themselves into the landscapes.

Physical culture and militarisation

The battles raging over the peaks of South Tyrol created a special relationship between militarism and mountaineering. The isolation of the alpine landscape, the relatively small number of combatants, and the necessary reliance on their comrades for survival forged a special bond between the participants. At the same time, the mountains with their volatile weather conditions and exploitable terrain became decisive factors in the battles. Even after the end of the war, the meaning of mountains forever changed in the minds of former combatants: for them, mountains in themselves became lieu de mémoire.

The marriage of mountaineering and the warrior ethos found a fertile soil among alpinists. Hermann Czánt, the Transylvanian-German mountain sports enthusiast produced a multitude of publications on the usage of mountaineering techniques for military purposes. Besides the practical benefits of experience in the alpine terrain, he argued for the psychological advantage: in his view, cooperation on the mountain would forge individuals into a unit, and boys into men. These arguments are echoed in the contemporary Alpini Museum, that turns with nostalgia towards the abolished compulsory military service in Italy. At the same time, the warrior ethos is emphasised in the Breakout memorial hike in contemporary Hungary: the practice of hiking and militarism are actively interconnected in nationalist subcultures.

Inclusion and Exclusion

South Tyrol with its rival alpinist associations transformed the Alps into the venue of nationalist struggle. The Alpenverein and SAT went to great lengths to exclude each other from the mountain space. After the secession of South Tyrol, the Alpenverein fostered unified action to retain the German character of the lost territories: alpinism became a tool to assert control and dominance over the space.

In the German and Austrian Alpenverein, discussion focused on the "enemy within": in a long process of exclusive arguments and policies, Jews were purged from the association. Eduard Pichl argued for the importance of "Alpine purity" to retain the essence of the Verein's German character. Although the main focus was on the exclusion of Jews, other groups were blamed for the ills of mountaineering culture as well: mass tourism was lamented by some for the loss of the peace and quiet of the mountains, while women were thought to necessitate further mechanisation, as they were "too weak to climb". Discussions over the future course of alpinism were therefore animated by the interplay of inclusions and exclusions: the main question of the Alpenverein was which group do they want to see in the alpine landscape?

In the case of Transylvania, economic policies were put into place to play the land into the hands of Hungarian landowners. Parts of the Olympic complex at the foot of the Pietrosz were built on land donated by the community of Borsa: the Romanian and Jewish landowners refused to sell their lands earlier, thus, they were expropriated and given to the Hungarian Ski Association. There was an effort to banish foreign place names from the public sphere, and guidebooks omitted the non-Hungarian cultural heritage in the area, creating an illusion of Transylvania as an ethnically homogenous space.

Mountains as lieux de mémoire: South Tyrol

In South Tyrol and the Trentino, the memory landscape relating to the alpine events of the 20th century houses multi-faceted narratives of multiple memory actors. The Winter War is

commemorated both as a heroic struggle for the liberation of the territories as well as a peculiar historical event, whose traces frozen in the glaciers are reminders of the personal stories of the combatants. The history of fascism and Italy's involvement in World War II also offer different perspectives: while the Alpini Museum buys into the alpine warrior ethos and maintains the myth of large-scale support for the resistance, the Trento Historical Foundation analyses and disperses this myth in the space of a few hundred meters. The Messner Mountain Museum allows a private memory actor to make a contribution to the memory landscape. While Messner's person is controversial for his individualistic purposes, his museums show a non-nationalist interpretation of the role of mountains in human history.

Berchtesgaden

Berchtesgaden as a space of memory had been in the forefront of discussions ever since the end of World War II. After such a long existence as lieu de mémoire, Berchtesgaden offers a critical perspective on the role of mountains in Nazi propaganda. The Dokumentation Obersalzberg disperses the myth of domestic Hitler that was built on the back of his Obersalzberg residence. It shows the discrepancies between Hitler's image as a traditional man, and the process of modernisation that erased the traditional community of Obersalzberg to make space for the Berghof residence. Besides displaying the history of atrocities in the Third Reich, special attention is shown to the local interplay of inclusion and exclusion: the expropriation of property in Jewish ownership in Obersalzberg is explored in great detail.

The Alpenverein as a local alpine association also contributes to the image of the Alps as lieu de mémoire: the organisation's critical engagement with its own exclusionary past centres the perspective of Jewish climbers, who were barred from the alpine space. By funding research into its antisemitic history, and displaying it at lieux de mémoire, the Alpenverein anchors its identity in contrast with its former image. The Alpine Peace Crossing initiative also offers a new perspective with its practical approach to the mountains: by walking the route of Jewish

refugees, the Alps become a venue of transcending national borders rather than constituting them.

Transylvania

Mountains are frequently referenced elements of the Trianon trauma. The sentiments of community members are projected to the mountains: they are described as having a will on their own and wanting to "return" to Hungarian soil. Mountains are also referenced as a substitute for the whole of Transylvania: Albert Wass's famous title decries the loss of ownership over the mountains instead of describing the feeling of injustice over the loss of Hungarian control over Transylvania.

At the same time, mountains as anchoring points of trauma remain untouched and eternal. There are a few memorials erected in the Carpathians referencing concrete events in the historic journey of the loss of territory. With that, mountains can function as a symbol of the whole Trianon-trauma: without linking them to concrete events, they remain pure and natural symbols of national loss. The mountains cannot be a source of debate over the controversies of past and present nationalism; rather, they naturalise nationalism as an eternal, everlasting natural phenomenon.

It is precisely this untouched nature of the mountains as lieux de mémoire that attracts alternative memory cultures from mainland Hungary to Transylvania. Hiking in the Carpathians carries a sense of continuity for nationalist organisations like the Hazajáró Egylet. This contributes to the success of the Trianon-syndrome in Hungary, that keeps the trauma of territorial loss fresh and emotional for a large segment of society.

At the same time, aspects of nationalistic alpinism survive in the annual Breakout hike in Budapest. The militaristic atmosphere of the event commemorating the fallen soldiers of the joint Hungarian-German operation attracts nationalist memory actors from Germany and Hungary as well. Therefore, during the Breakout hike, the mountains of Buda become

nationalist lieu de mémoire, commemorating, creating and validating the right-wing German and Hungarian participants as an imagined community forged by the experience of hiking.

Further research questions

Throughout my research, I encountered the considerable problem of the lack of a unified mountain sport organisation in Hungary. Although there was an effort to create one (Magyar Turista Szövetség – Hungarian Tourist Association), the initiative was short-lived. The reasons for the lack of a unified organisation and the impossibility of creating one are unclear – perhaps this deserves further research.

At the same time, the exclusion of Jews from the Hungarian sports realm was the initiative of a unified governmental body (Országos Sport Központ – National Sports Centre). The decision was not communicated clearly to hiking associations, therefore, there was a great amount of uncertainty about the situation of Jewish members. The history of this mechanism would also be an interesting consideration for future research.

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