

Interwar Austria's Continuity between Liberalism and Nationalism from the Viewpoint of Alpine-Tourism

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1. From Three Camps Theory to Continuity between Liberalism and Nationalism

Most histories of Alpine-Tourism in Austria have been written from the perspective of Three Camps Theory, which assumes discontinuity between Liberalism and Nationalism,¹ since Rainer Amstädter academically proved the existence of strong Anti-Semitism in many Austrian alpine associations.² Such studies showed how radical German-nationalist activist Eduard Pichl introduced Anti-Semitism into the German and Austrian Alpine Association (a.b., the Alpine Association), the biggest alpine association in Austria and Germany, established in 1874. Moreover, Pichl was instrumental in creating policies that excluded the alpine association of the Social Democratic Worker's Party (Sozialdemokratische Arbeiterpartei a.b., SDAP), the Friends of Nature (der Naturfreund), in addition to Jewish members. Therefore, historians from German-speaking regions focused on conflicts between Pichl's National Camp (portrayed as “bad”) and the Social Democratic Camp (portrayed as “good”). As a result, little attention has been paid

¹ According to Three Camps Theory, strong Nationalism in Austria beat weak Liberalism at the end of the 19th century, producing three political mass movements (“camps”) in the interwar years. Conflicts between the camps divided Austrian society, leading to an Authoritarian government and later Nazi rule. Post-WWII Austria did not emphasize political ideologies, leading to the dominance of democratic and liberal values, as in the 19th century.

² Rainer Amstädter, *Alpinismus. Kultur-Organisation-Politik* (Wien, 1996); Günther Dagmar, *Alpine Quergänge. Kulturgeschichte des bürgerlichen Alpinismus (1870-1930)* (Frankfurt/New York, 1998); Helmuth Zebhauser, *Alpinismus im Hitlerstaat. Gedanken, Erinnerungen, Dokumente* (München, 1998); Matthias Marschik, *Sportdiktatur. Bewegungskulturen im nationalsozialistischen Österreich* (Wien, 2008); Hanno Loewy/Gerhard Milchram (Hg.), „Hast du meine Alpen gesehen?“ *Eine jüdische Beziehungsgeschichte* (Hohenems, 2009); Martin AchRAINER/Nicholas Mailänder, “Der Verein,” in: *Der Deutsche Alpenverein, der Österreichische Alpenverein u. der Alpenverein Südtirol* (Hg.), *Berg Heil! Alpenverein und Bergsteigen 1918-1945* (Wien/Köln/Weimar, 2011), 193-318; Martin AchRAINER/Friederik Kaiser/Florian Trojer, “Berg Heil! Eine Einführung,” in: *Berg Heil!*, 9-16.



to the close connections among alpine associations that went beyond political camps.³

As discussed by some interwar Austrian political historians over the last decade, Pan-Germanism not only influenced German-Nationalists, but also the Social Democrats and the Christian Social Party, with personal connections in intellectual circles and mass media forming despite different ideologies. According to Thorpe, there is little difference between the “alldeutsch” advocated by German nationalists, and the “gesamtdeutsch” of the Christian Social Party.⁴

Many politicians and intellectuals belonged to the big alpine associations, including the ‘Friends of Nature’, popular among workers. Almost all alpinists were so interested in mountaineering that they pragmatically collaborated across social classes and camps. Among them prevailed a tendency toward German-nationalism with different political flavors. Thorpe’s wide Pan-Germanism perspective is shown in Pichl switching from “alldeutsch” to “gesamtdeutsch.” Today, however, I will examine Pichl’s changing position, and the intimate, politics-spanning, connections among Austrian mountain climbers from a different perspective.

The first and the second chapters discuss how alpine associations’ systems of inter-association mountain hut fee discounts were made and used by alpinists. I would like to point out that they could be used to illustrate the continuity between Liberalism and Nationalism in Austria. In the third chapter, I will suggest a form of “political indifference” from the viewpoint of continuity between Liberalism and Nationalism.

The hut fees reduction system gradually became national after Pichl introduced the “Aryan Paragraph” into the Alpine Association’s “Austria” section’s charter in 1921. However, it remained liberal even in the eras of Authoritarian government and National Socialists. Members’ material and intellectual property continued to be so important to the Alpine Association that it imposed property criteria for membership, thereby obviating mass tourism.⁵

Pieter M. Judson proved that continuity between Liberalism and Nationalism existed in the rural regions of the Habsburg Monarchy.⁶ He also analyzed and detailed the situations that produced so-called “liberals.” Such liberals tended to regard market-oriented competition, self-improvement, pragmatism, intellectual independence, and property ownership as important. The “active citizenship” based on the above criteria excluded women and workers, because they could only practice “passive citizenship.” As German-nationalism advanced, rural liberals shifted the scope of their parameters from local to national. According to Judson, they may have been incentivized to include German women and workers, but exclude non-Germans. With this in mind, I will examine the continuity between Liberalism and Nationalism in the Alpine Association during the interwar years.

³ The Authoritarian government prohibited the Austrian Nazi Party and suppressed German nationalism, including in the Alpine Association, under the rule of the Fatherland Front. Therefore, the Corporate State seemed to resist Nazi rule. Most authors on alpine-tourism explored only the conflicts between Nazi-oriented Pichl and the Authoritarian government. However, Pichl allegedly agreed with the Corporate Government’s policies. His position changed from “alldeutsch,” to “gesamtdeutsch,” i.e. from “love for Austria” to “valuing Austria and Germany equally.” Pichl used such rhetoric to further his agenda. I suppose it would be inconsistent with Austrian historiography if the authors admitted that Pichl concurred with the government.

⁴ Thorpe claims that Pan-Germanism equated to “alldeutsch” because of “victim theory.” After WWII Austria accepted the “Moscow Declaration” of 1943: “Austria is the first victim of German rule, and it should be liberated from it,” the then political leaders of the Socialist Party (SPÖ) and the People’s Party (ÖVP, CS) asserted that they had cooperatively resisted Nazi rule although they had agreed to the Annexation of 1938. As Austrian identity had been created on the basis of victim theory, they did not want to expose that they had been at all influenced by Pan-Germanism. Cf., Julie Thorpe, “Provincials Imaging the Nation: Pan-German Identity in Salzburg, 1933–1938”, in: *Zeitgeschichte* 33–4 (2006): 179–198; –, “Pan-Germanism after Empire: Austrian ‘Germandom’ at Home and Abroad,” in: Günter Bischof, Fritz Plasser, Peter Berger (eds.), *From Empire to Republic: Post-World War I Austria* (New Orleans, 2010), 254–272; –, *Pan-Germanism and the Austrofascist State, 1933–1938* (Manchester/New York, 2011); Janek Wasserman, *Black Vienna. The Radical Right in the Red City, 1918–1938* (Ithaca/London, 2014).

⁵ Takako Furukawa, “Austrian Liberal Tourism in the Mass Politicized Periods: the Relationships between the German and Austrian Alpine Association and the Friends of Nature”, in: *The Journal of East European Studies* 36 (2014): 3–25, in Japanese.

⁶ Pieter M. Judson, *Exclusive Revolutionaries. Liberal Politics, Social Experience, and National Identity in the Austrian Empire, 1848–1914* (Ann Arbor, 1996).

2. From liberal Alpine-Tourism to liberal-national Alpine-Tourism

The Alpine Association was founded in the late 19th century by liberal alpinists. They regarded mountaineering as a form of cultural activity as well as a means of cultivating oneself. They also promoted independence stemming from concepts of property rights. The Association gave regional sections autonomy, with sections having rights to oppose resolutions of the Central Committee.

The Alpine Association had many mountain huts in the Alps that regional section members could use at cheaper rates. Inter-association hut discounts meant that other associations' members could access the Alpine Association's huts at a reduced rate, if their association owned just one hut, namely their own property. Alpine associations formed collaborative relationships through these mutual discounts for mountain huts. Liberal Tourism was founded on such relationships. Even small workers' alpine associations, like the Friends of Nature, made enthusiastic efforts to enter this Liberal Tourism collaboration to access the special rates for the Alpine Association's mountain huts.

Two incidents initiated by German-nationalist activist and Alpine Association member Pichl in interwar Austria, can now be examined: excluding Jews from membership, and abolishing the hut fee discount for non-members, which meant excluding the Friends of Nature. From the perspective of Three Camps Theory, these incidents have been considered to be the results of political conflicts. However, this leaves several facts unexplained. For instance, some sections of the Alpine Association opposed Anti-Semitism and maintained contact with Jews.⁷ Additionally, the now-excluded, social-democratic Friends of Nature, and other national bourgeois alpine associations, which had already adopted Aryan clauses, formed a new hut fees discount scheme to replace the old liberal one. These facts show that in 1920's Austria, especially in "Red Vienna", Liberal Tourism transcended political camps, guaranteeing each section's independence in the Alpine Association, and serving to maintain pragmatic collaboration on the basis of old liberal relationships.

Moreover, this continuity between Nationalism and Liberalism in interwar Austria can be considered from the viewpoint of tourism. First, Pichl's radical national movement was under the influence of a hierarchical Liberal Tourism, and because the new Alpine Association's hut fee discounts only benefited Germans or those who could afford higher fees, his "German Nation" was therefore very limited. Second, the Friends of Nature cooperated with nationalized associations as well as the liberal Jewish Alpine Association to secure mountain huts for the use of more than seventy thousand social democratic workers. Thus, the Friends of Nature provided contrast to the Alpine Association by being liberal, national, and pragmatic enough to place collaboration above political ideology. At this point we can see the continuity between Nationalism and Liberalism that was brought about by the Social Democratic Movement.

At the end of the 1920's, Pichl became more socialist in the face of the Great Depression. He helped the weakened members of his "Austria" section to find jobs because he wanted to expand national influence. Furthermore, he proposed reducing membership fees for the unemployed, which the Central Committee rejected. After becoming President of "Austria" section in 1921, Pichl made efforts to develop Alpine-Tourism in Austria by building new huts and renovating old huts in co-operation with the Austrian government. His idea of alpine-tourism was more popular, compared to that of the Central Committee that, under the control of WWI veteran alpinists in Germany, strived to limit mountaineering to the elite.

It should be noted that the liberal-national hut fee discounts remained into the National Socialist era. It has been said that mass tourism developed under Nazi rule. Meanwhile, the Alpine Association restricted use of its huts to

⁷ *Donauland=Nachrichten. Zeitschrift des Alpenvereins Donauland*, 1933, Nr. 136, o. S. A circular letter from the Association's "Wienerland" section attached to the Newsletter for Donauland. At a Donauland hut opening ceremony in 1933, it was noted that the Friends of Nature, the Tourist Club, and the Central Committee of the Alpine Association had sent letters of apology for not attending (*Donauland N.*, 1932, Nr. 133, 93). Letters of invitation to hut openings were sent to all alpine associations that had contact with the sender association.

prevent mass tourism in the domain of elite alpinists. Exclusive hut fee discount systems remained complex in the National Socialist era, i.e. there were liberal and national exclusions.⁸ By this point there was no difference between Pichl's popular-national Alpine-Tourism, and elitist tourism. Pichl wanted to make tourism reflect his ideal nation, consisting of three segregated categories of people: elite Alpine Association alpinists, also playing the role of protectors of the "German Nation" ("Schutzherr von Schutzverein" in Ostmark), rich urban tourists who could pay undiscounted hut fees, and rural mountain locals serving the elite alpinists. Pichl's "German Nation" left no room for the masses that could not or would not pay hut fees. He believed that because construction of mountain huts cost a great deal, users should pay fees appropriate to their status as independent mountaineers. Thus Pichl presented himself as liberal as well as nationalist.

3. From continuity between Liberalism and Nationalism to "political indifference"

In this chapter I would like to suggest that liberal-national Alpine-Tourism caused "political indifference."⁹ In studying Alpine-Tourism we can find an indifference to nationality—"national indifference"—practiced in bilingual border regions. For example, in South Tyrol, South Carinthia, and South Styria of the Dual Monarchy before WWI, which was said to be conflict-prone, some German sections of alpine associations could buy lands, build huts, or set trail signs in Italian-speaking regions.¹⁰ However, in the 1920's most conflicts had shifted to issues shared by political camps.¹¹ After WWI Austria became "the rest of the Habsburg Monarchy," almost all political parties promoted Austrian nation-building through connections to Germany, and struggled to set distinctive differences in their political agenda. German-nationalists and Christian Socials urged Anti-Semitism and opposed the SDAP because they were afraid of the influence of the Soviet Union and "Red Vienna." Their political conflicts spread over a range of activities, including mountain associations. In this sense, during the interwar years among mountaineers in Vienna, "political indifference" was never apolitical, as per Tara Zahra in her article.¹²

With regard to "national indifference," Judson claims on grounds similar to that of Rogers Brubaker's "Ethnicity without groups" that "nation is never an unchanging and enduring community, and we should consider "nation" as a way to perceive the world, as a lens through which people can understand the world, and not as an actor, nor a subject."¹³ When we use the word "nation," we should not assume that such exists. We should clarify when and how it is used in each context. In other words, we should specify what lies behind it. Tara Zahra suggested that the existence of national indifference should be investigated because "indifference to nationalism has been effaced in part by the cultural and linguistic turns that have so energized the study of nation, gender and race as categories of

⁸ When army personnel used mountain huts, they had to wear uniforms, show their ID cards, use only mattresses, and enter huts by 19:00 to prioritize member comfort.

⁹ Tara Zahra suggested "national indifference" could be applied to "political indifference." Cf. Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities: National Indifference as a Category of Analysis," in: *Slavic Review* 69-1 (Spring 2010): 93-119, here 118.

¹⁰ Judson has already referred to some cases of "national indifference" in the mountain regions of the Habsburg Monarchy in his "Guardians of the Nation" (*Guardians of the Nation: Activists on the Language Frontiers of Imperial Austria* (Cambridge MA/London, 2006)). There were some other cases in the Alpine Association. The most famous case is the "Bremer Haus" conflict in the Bocca di Brenta. Cf., *Bergererleben. Das Magazin des Alpenvereins Südtirol* 5 (2014): 30-31, in https://issuu.com/alpenvereinsuedtirol/docs/avs_magazin_ausgabe0514_web_ez, 03/02/2016. Tait Keller presented that case as typical of national conflicts before WWI. Cf. Tait Keller, *Apostles of the Alps: Mountaineering and Nation Building in Germany and Austria, 1860-1939* (Chapel Hill, 2016), 93. However, there were almost certainly conflicts between Italian landowners who sold land to the Alpine Association and Italian nationalists for greater benefit.

¹¹ Of course, national conflicts continued, especially in border regions such as South Tyrol, South Carinthia, South Styria and Burgenland. These cases remain to be investigated from the perspective of national indifference.

¹² She also pointed out that "indifference to politics has rarely been entirely apolitical and has instead carried multiple possible political meanings" (cf. Tara Zahra, "Imagined Noncommunities," 114). I use this meaning of "political indifference."

¹³ Pieter M. Judson, "Writing the History of Cultural Borderlands in Habsburg Central Europe," in: Gerald Lamprecht/Ursula Mindler/Heidrun Zettelbauer (Hg.), *Zonen der Begrenzung. Aspekte kultureller und räumlicher Grenzen in der Moderne* (Bielefeld, 2012), 17-32, here 22; Rogers Brubakers, *Ethnicity without Groups* (Cambridge MA, 2004), 7-27.

analysis.” Especially in east-central-European studies, Nationalism has been a frequent theme “in the realms of modern culture and discourse.” It has a “... dangerous potential to reinforce a totalitarian framework for understanding east central European politics and society. Historians have often linked the rise of nationalist and mass political movements in the late nineteenth century to the so-called destruction or invasion of the private sphere, a beginning step on the slippery slope toward totalitarianism.” In fact, non-elites who learned the skill of politicization have used its politics for personal gain. In this sense they were not ideologues, but cool or indifferent to politics.¹⁴

Following Judson and Zahra, I will examine attitudes and terms surrounding mountaineers like “politically neutral”, or “beyond political camps”, and assume that we might regard them as “politically indifferent.” First, we will contextualize when, why, and how “dual membership” of alpine associations—especially the Friends of Nature—came to be criticized as “political indifference.” Secondly, I will explore the possibility that “political indifference” in the Friends of Nature was brought about by cultural conflicts between workers and the Social Democratic labor movement. In other words, I will explore the origin of “political indifference” and how it could be applied to nationalists. Finally, I will ask if a “Greater German Nation” would have been acceptable to non-nationalist mountaineers, and suggest a closer examination of such rhetoric through comment on Tait Keller’s new book.¹⁵

3-1. Dual membership in the context of “political indifference”

As previously mentioned, many historians of Alpinism in German-speaking regions suggest that the Friends of Nature was an alpine association for the proletariat because it was founded by a few Social Democrats in Vienna in 1895, and because the Party soon after admitted it as a sister organization. While it is true that the Friends of Nature offered the proletariat cheap hiking programs to city surrounds, it was also a genuine alpine association. Almost all of the founders and leading members were trained mountaineers and members of other big mountain associations, such as the Alpine Club, the Austrian Tourist Club, the Austrian Mountain Association, and the Alpine Association.

Before WWI, mountaineer members of the Friends of Nature in Austria consisted of handcraft masters, skilled craftsmen, shopkeepers, tradesmen, teachers, and intellectuals who could vacation in the Alps. The strong relationships among artisans of same occupation started in the 19th century and continued into the 1920’s. Sometimes, such artisans shared hobbies like mountaineering. Before WWI, there was good contact between the Friends of Nature and other big mountain associations, especially the Austrian Mountain Association (Österreichischer Gebirgsverein), whose members were also artisans, shopkeepers and members of the lower middle classes. For example, Leopold Happisch, the chief editor of the Friends of Nature newsletter, was a master printer in Vienna. One of his work colleagues, Hugo Gerbers, founded the Austrian Mountain Association and was also a master printer and former member of the SDAP before he went abroad for work. They maintained an uninterrupted friendship after the founding of the Friends of Nature. In other words, the social-democratic aligned Friends of Nature had an intimate relationship with the Mountain Association, established with Aryan principles in its founding documents.¹⁶ Therefore, cross-membership hut discounts were easily established. Politically, Happisch was close to Pernerstorfer and Franz Schumeier, who were said to be right-wing—or German nationalists—in the SDAP.

Thus, before and immediately after WWI, there were intimate relationships between the Friends of Nature and other alpine associations, including the “Austria” section of the Alpine Association. Most alpinists who belonged to the Friends of Nature continued to hold memberships with other alpine associations; dual-membership. Alpinists in small, poor mountain associations like the Friends of Nature, that owned fewer mountain huts, had to get membership in bigger alpine associations which held more mountain huts on higher mountains. They wanted more hut-use and membership benefits than mere cross-association fee discounts could provide. This was common in small mountain

¹⁴ Zahra, “Imagined Noncommunities,” 111–113.

¹⁵ Keller, *Apostles of the Alps*.

¹⁶ *50 Jahre alpine Arbeit* Zweig Ostmärkischer Gebirgsverein des deutschen Alpines (Wien, 1940), 6, in: Amstädter, 85.

associations until 1923, when Pichl abolished hut fee discounts for non-members of the Alpine Association, at which point the Friends of Nature and other bourgeois alpine associations created a nearly identical replacement discounts system. The SDAP leadership who obeyed Party guidelines gradually came to criticize dual membership and relationships with alpine associations they considered “bourgeois.” The ambiguous, “neutral” attitudes of the Friends of Nature Executive Committee that had been accepted before WWI fell out of favor after the war. Nonetheless, mountaineers maintained strong liberal connections,¹⁷ even though Happisch himself became the second President of the ASKÖ (Arbeitsgemeinschaft für Sport und Körperkultur in Österreich), an umbrella sporting organization for workers in Austria, and the Friends of Nature became one of the most important sporting clubs for the SDAP. The Friends of Nature, however, came to depend upon the rich Party that ruled Vienna (that became its own state in 1922) and benefited from its tax revenue. The Friends of Nature wanted funds to build mountain huts on the Alps, but faced a German Board biased against Vienna, and which prioritized huts for hikers in the suburbs of other German sections instead. Thus it seemed to the Party that the Friends of Nature’s behavior was “neutral,” with its use of liberal rhetoric like “we should not bring politics into the mountains” regarded as “political indifference.” This point will be mentioned later.

Regarding the aforementioned theory of “indifference,” Tara Zahra suggests a critical examination of identity politics. She notes that historians pay much attention to “the ways in which gender, racial, class and national categories have overlapped, transformed, been contested,” but not to the “individuals who remained aloof to the demands of modern identity politics.”¹⁸ Applying this “indifference” theory, the attitudes of some elite young Friends of Nature dual-membership holders who did not show loyalty to Party doctrine, while using political conflicts to facilitate climbing mountains,¹⁹ could be considered a kind of “political indifference.”

A young, talented, but poor mountaineer, Fritz Kasperek was a member of “Alpinisten Guild,” the young elite alpinist sub-group of the Friends of Nature, but also belonged to a similar group in the Austrian Mountain Association. Kasperek became a member of the Alpine Association when it absorbed the Austrian Mountain Association in 1931. He had close contact with alpinists in the “Reichensteiner,” a famous German national alpine association of which Karl Sandtner—intimate friend of Pichl and well-known anti-Semite—was once president. The “Reichensteiner” became another section of the Alpine Association in 1910. Kasperek and his “Reichensteiner” friends climbed together until at least September 1933.²⁰ After the Friends of Nature was banned by the Christian Social Party dictatorship, Kasperek was said to have joined the International Brigades supporting the Republicans in the Spanish Civil War in 1937. In fact, many Friends of Nature members crossed mountainous borders to fight in Spain.²¹ According to Kasperek’s autobiography, travelling to join the Brigade was also an opportunity to practice mountain climbing.²² In the following year under the Nazi Regime, he made the first successful ascent of the north face of the Eiger with three other elite mountaineers. After this success, he became a member of the Armed SS (Schutzstaffel)²³ and provided a climbing report to the Association’s “Austria” section, at least partly to solicit funds for future mountaineering expeditions from

¹⁷ In one case, members of the Friends of Nature stayed at Pichl’s hut in South Carinthia and praised their warm reception by its caretakers. There were no restrictions for guests (except Jews) if they paid normal hut fees („Der Naturfreund“. *Mitteilungen des Touristen-Vereins „Die Naturfreunde“*, 1925, Nr. 11/12, 175).

¹⁸ Zahra, *Imagined Noncommunities*, 110; —, *Kidnapped Souls. National Indifference and the Battle for Children in the Bohemian Lands, 1900–1948* (Ithaca/London, 2008); —, *The Lost Children. Reconstructing Europe’s Families after World War II* (Cambridge, MA/London, 2011); Pieter M. Judson/—, “Introduction,” in: *Austrian History Yearbook* 43 (2012): 21–27.

¹⁹ The young elite mountaineers who joined the Friends of Nature in their 20’s fell into two opposing categories: party loyalists who engaged in socialist activities, and the politically indifferent who just wanted to climb.

²⁰ *Der Naturfreund*, 1934, Nr. 1/3, 34.

²¹ Eduard Rabofsky, “Politischer Einsatz in den Bergen,” in: Wulf Erdmann/Jochen Zimmer (Hg.), *Hundert Jahre Kampf in die freie Nature. Illustrierte Geschichte der Naturfreunde* (Essen, 1991), 97–103.

²² Fritz Kasperek, “Pyrenäen,” in: *Ein Bergsteiger. Fritz Kasperek. Einer der Bezwingen der Eiger-Nordwand* (Salzburg, 1939), 152–156.

²³ After WWII he was imprisoned for two years, then opened a sports store in Vienna. He died in the mountains in 1954.

Vienna City, which had a National Socialist mayor.²⁴ He wrote a few records of climbing the Eiger's north face for various Alpine Association sections, of which one was published in the "Austria" section's newsletter. In those articles, he did not use phrases admiring Hitler or "völkisch" words, although he was undoubtedly familiar with the concept of conflicts among "Völker" (ethnic groups).²⁵ However, he did use "völkisch" words in his book published the next year,²⁶ supposedly a condition for publication.

The Friends of Nature permitted dual membership until the winding up of the association in 1934, even though its Executive Committee a few times warned dual-members to withdraw from bourgeois alpine associations. The number of warnings issued indicates that they went unheeded, and that some the Executive Committee acquiesced to the demands of members who wanted to climb challenging mountains at low cost. What made such attitudes possible in the political climate of the 1930's?

Before WWI the Friends of Nature modeled itself after liberal alpine associations, such as the "Austria" section of the Alpine Association, not only in structure but also in ideals and rules for member behavior. Liberal mountain associations resolved to be "neutral on the mountains" and to "not bring politics into the mountains." They maintained a strong distinction between culture and politics. Legally, alpine associations including the Friends of Nature were registered as cultural, not political, associations.

When the Friends of Nature revealed plans to build the first hut on a mountaintop near Innsbruck in 1905, some bourgeois alpine associations defended their opposition, using the phrase "do not bring politics into the mountains." They were afraid of socialist workers coming into the mountains and spreading cheaper member fees. In contrast, the "Austria" section charged the Friends of Nature its normal membership rates and allowed them to use their mountain huts at member rates, even though they knew it was an affiliate of the SDAP.²⁷ Friends of Nature members, however, were not automatically conferred full member status in the Alpine Association's "Austria" section. The Friends of Nature was registered as a single member bloc, an 'association membership' in other words. These arrangements were regarded as "politically neutral" by alpine associations and the Friends of Nature, which praised its leading members for this arrangement in a special newsletter column.²⁸

In order to use the Alpine Association mountain huts, the Friends of Nature also adopted a policy of keeping the mountains apolitical. Immediately after WWI the Alpine Association declared that all of its mountain huts could be used by any other mountain association's members, as long as they used mattresses, and not the beds. The Friends of Nature accepted this, even though it meant less than full equality. Even after the inter-association hut discounts were abolished, the Friends of Nature leadership believed in not bringing politics into the mountains.²⁹

To compensate for the reduction in accessible mountain huts, the Friends of Nature asked its German Board for money to build huts, but were refused due to a reluctance to fund Austria. Vienna's Friends of Nature had no option but to accept money from Viennese youth welfare programs. Thanks to relief funds from "Red Vienna," they could build huts in the mountains near the "Austria" section's operating area, as well as compete with them in bidding for huts. Somewhat beholden to their benefactors, the Friends of Nature could not maintain internal political neutrality.

²⁴ *Nachrichten der Sektion Austria des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins*, 1939, Folge 2, 27.

²⁵ Fritz Kasperek, "Marmolata-Südpfeiler," in: Fritz Kasperek, *Vom Peilstein zur Eiger-Nordwand, Erlebnisse eines Bergsteigers* (Salzburg, 1951), 175.

²⁶ *N. Austria*, 1938, Folge 9, 122–123, Fritz Kasperek, *Der Kampf um die Eiger-Nordwand*; Fritz Kasperek, *Eiger-Nordwand*, in: dem, *Ein Bergsteiger. Fritz Kasperek. Einer der Bezwingen der Eiger-Nordwand* (Salzburg, 1939), 221–225.

²⁷ *N. Austria*, 1905, Jg. XIV, 36. Social Democrat and member of Parliament, Wilhelm Ellenbogen was already a member of the "Austria" section alongside the Friends of Nature (*N. Austria*, 1905, Jg. XIV, 55). Other bourgeois alpine associations similarly gave the Friends of Nature membership rates.

²⁸ *Der Naturfreund*, 1905, Nr. 1, 5.

²⁹ See the dispute in 1923 about the abolition of the hut discount system between Ernst Enzensperger of the Alpine Association and Wesely of the Friends of Nature. Both argued that the other's association had breached political neutrality in the mountains (*Mitteilungen des Deutschen und Österreichischen Alpenvereins*, 1923, Nr. 11, 119; *Der Naturfreund*, 1924, Nr. 3/4, 53–54; Nr. 7/8, 101–102).

On the other hand, they continued to make hut fee-discount arrangements with other bourgeois alpine associations. Moreover, they continued to admit dual-members and kept contact with bourgeois, German-nationalist inclined associations to benefit their own members, because they could not build enough high mountain huts to satisfy demand from their member-alpinists, even with funding from the Party in Vienna. However, this funding from Vienna allowed the Friends of Nature a stronger bargaining position in the hierarchy led by the "Austria" section. Through participating in hut fee discount systems the Friends of Nature could achieve a form of equality among national alpine associations. Friends of Nature leadership sometimes used national rhetoric like "We Germans have been the ethnic people of hiking and climbing."³⁰ Nevertheless, they also pragmatically entered into hut fee discount systems with Jewish alpine associations, such as Alpenverein Donauland, that had been established after their exclusion from the Alpine Association.³¹ This "national indifference" from the German-nationalist perspective distinguished the Friends of Nature from other national bourgeois alpine associations.

Thus, the new mountain-hut fees reduction system was not liberal, but created on the grounds of liberal-nationalist relationships among mountaineers. The Friends of Nature maintaining relationships with bourgeois associations for better access to mountain huts while simultaneously affiliating with the SAJ (Verband Sozialistischer Arbeiter Jugend) youth organization of the SDAP may have appeared "politically indifferent" to the Party at first, but this appearance of neutrality became increasingly difficult to maintain. The Friends of Nature attracting and retaining members by balancing affiliations with the Party and alpine associations formed the context in which heroic, mass-media friendly, young mountaineers like Fritz Kasperek appeared, who could leverage their popularity to access bourgeois alpine associations, attract young members, and operate in a space above politics.

3-2. Incubating "political indifference"

In this section I will point out possible opposition to Party policy in the Friends of Nature, and examine the circumstances that might produce "political indifference." One of the founders of the Friends of Nature, Georg Schmiedl, was an elementary school teacher at Vienna's Volksschule, and a member of the SDAP's Young Teachers Movement at the end of the 19th century. He became a Vienna City educational investigator under the SDAP mayoralty after WWI. He had a wide variety of personal relationships in educational and academic circles. Tara Zahra introduced Georg Schmiedl as one of the German nationalist educators in her "Kidnapped Souls."³²

Before WWI, the Friends of Nature asked Schmiedl's friend, Angelo Carraro, to be a chief educator in their scientific section. Carraro was a famous freethinker who in the 1920's founded a freethinker's association in Vienna to compete with an established freethinker's association that was shifting closer to the SDAP. Carraro, an anarchist, rejected all systems of society, including political parties, even though he himself was a Party member. Schmiedl and Carraro were regarded highly by executive members like President Rohrauer, and leading editor Happisch, who were themselves freethinkers, and who believed in rule by the Laws of Nature.³³

As the SDAP became stronger in post-war Vienna, its cultural and sporting organizations, including the Friends of Nature, aligned themselves more with the Party. In 1926, before the official announcement of the Linz Party Program, Carraro was expelled from the Friends of Nature because of his anti-Party attitudes.³⁴ Additionally,

³⁰ *Der Naturfreund*, 1919, Nr. 5/6, 67; 1920, Nr. 1/2, 6; 1923, Nr. 1/2, 15. In *Der Naturfreund*, such "national" rhetoric was common.

³¹ *Donauland N.*, 1925, Nr. 42, 17-18; *Der Naturfreund*, 1930, Nr. 5/6, 110. From the standpoint of Donauland, they thought themselves naturally German (*Donauland N.*, 1925, Nr. 43, 36).

³² Zahra, *Kidnapped Souls*, 58-59. A. Pehersdorfer who was introduced in the same book at page 61, was also a leading member of the Friends of Nature, especially in the scientific unit.

³³ Takako Furukawa, "Enlightenment through «Nature». A History of the Friends of Nature," in: *Quadrante. Areas, Cultures and Positions*, 2002, 4: 271-300; "The Connecting Politics of Natural History and Tourism," in: *Quadrante. Areas, Cultures and Positions* 10 (2008): 447-480.

³⁴ Carraro's name almost disappeared following his conflict with Wilhelm Ellenbogen in 1925 although he was very important in the

Schmiedl – who criticized the Party regarding the July Revolt of 1927—was disliked by Paul Richter, third President of the Friends of Nature and Party Executive member.³⁵ As he read a message of condolence for Schmiedl at the general meeting of the entire association in 1932, Richter did not mention Schmiedl's name, even though Schmiedl was a founding member.³⁶ However, Happisch remained in contact with Cararro and Schmiedl after their exclusion. Cararro's essay re-appeared in a 1932 edition of "Der Naturfreund" with initials in place of his name, despite his having once been introduced in the Viennese newsletter as an important science educator.³⁷ Moreover, the association established a youth library in the same year, named after Schmiedl.³⁸

From 1931 to 1932, conflicts between left and right factions intensified in the SAJ, and the Party struggled to integrate them. One of the leading members of the Party, Julius Deutsch, spoke at the Party Congress in Graz about compromise with the SAJ as to politically organizing youth outside the Party.³⁹ Reflecting the increasingly politically active youth movements, Friends of Nature members—younger than the general population—also demanded recognition.⁴⁰ One of the most symbolic events that resulted from this was the setting up of a youth library named after Schmiedl.⁴¹

Schmiedl and Carraro were pioneers of radical educational reforms in Red Vienna. The scientific education developed by the Friends of Nature was very similar to Otto Glöckel's.⁴² Karl Seitz—who had worked with Schmiedl in the Young Teachers Movement and became mayor of "Red Vienna"—and Glöckel were in the same intellectual circle of freethinkers as Schmiedl and Carraro. All of them revered the abilities of the young.

Happisch, who held Schmiedl and Carraro's views in high regard, used the rise of youth movements to rehabilitate them, and at the same time he also wanted to hold down the youth radicalization with their thoughts. Richter criticized the neutral attitudes of the Friends of Nature at the general meeting in 1932. Against him Happisch asserted the importance of the politically neutral activities. His view of workers' culture seemed influenced by the liberal tolerance in place between WWI and the 1920's, before it disappeared from the Party's culture. Happisch could not openly resist Party policy, but he must have been proud of the old Friends of Nature culture that had made mountaineers of artisans. He insisted that climbing parties should consist only of a few members practicing alpinist customs, and opposed group climbing that he felt expressed socialistic collectivism.⁴³ Older members, who had taken part in the association before WWI, shared Happisch's views, but more overtly defied Party policy.

After the Civil War in February 1934 the Friends of Nature was banned by the Christian Social Party government. Its successor organization, the "Friends of Mountain," was established. Its Executive Committee consisted of senior Friends of Nature members in addition to Hans Sinek who was its first President. Sinek was also the chief editor of the "Allgemeine Bergsteiger-Zeitung," belonged to the Austrian Alpine Club, and was a friend of German-nationalist activist Karl Sandtner, who became the second President of the Friends of Mountain. Sinek had

Friends of Nature (*Der Naturfreund*, 1925, Nr. 5/6, Nationalrat Dr. W. Ellenbogen, "Ethik des Wanderns," 68–70; A. Carraro, Wien, "Wandern und Weltanschauung," 71–73).

³⁵ Anson Rabinbach pointed out that there was also opposition from other right-wing groups that included Schmiedl, as well as from the Duczynska opposition and the intellectual opposition gathered around Max Adler (Anson Rabinbach, *The Crisis of Austrian Socialism. From Red Vienna to Civil War 1927–1934* (Chicago/London, 1983), 57–58).

³⁶ Protokoll der XII. Hauptversammlung des Touristenverein "Naturfreunde", 4/5 August 1932, 7–8.

³⁷ *Der Naturfreund*, 1932, Nr. 1/2, A. C., "Vom Körper," 26–27; Nr. 7/8, 159; *Der Gau-Bote, Mitteilungen des Gau's Wien im T. –V. „Die Naturfreunde“*, 1932, 3/4, IV.

³⁸ *Der Gau-Bote*, 1932, 1/2, IX.; 3/4, IV.

³⁹ Anson Rabinbach, "Politics and Pedagogy: The Austrian Social Democratic Youth Movement 1931–1932," in: *Journal of Contemporary History*, 13–2, Special Issue: Workers' Culture (Apr., 1978): 337–356, here, 346–347.

⁴⁰ A column was added in the *Der Naturfreund* that reported on mountain difficulty and ski competitions for young members.

⁴¹ An apartment named after Georg Schmiedl was built by the SDAP in 1928, when the president of the Friends of Nature was not Richter, but Karl Volkert. In 1931, the Friends of Nature made a commemorative plate for Schmiedl.

⁴² See Furukawa's "Enlightenment through «Nature»" and "The Connecting Politics of Natural History and Tourism."

⁴³ Protokoll der XI. Hauptversammlung des T. V. „Die Naturfreunde“, zu Zürich, 1928, 11.

taught at the Friends of Nature mountaineering school at the People's Home in Ottakring.⁴⁴ Although Happisch and other leaders did not take part in the Friends of Mountain, some others joined the Executive Committee. Many older members who had joined the Friends of Nature before WWI transferred their membership and remained members past 1934.⁴⁵ They stayed loyal to the Friends of Nature, and not to the Party. These older artisan-members maintained relations with other artisans who belonged to other alpine associations. One Friends of Mountain Executive Committee member was Hans Nemecek, who had been a member of the SDAP and a leading member of the Friends of Nature in addition to being an executive member of the Austrian Mountain Association, and a leader of the Alpine Rescue Committee in Vienna.⁴⁶ After the banning of the Friends of Nature, he helped Pichl before becoming President of the Austrian Mountain Association after WWII. But he was never reported to be a Friends of Nature member, nor to have had any relations with Pichl.

The second Friends of Mountain President, Karl Sandtner, once President of the "Reichensteier," also admired the first Friends of Nature President, Social Democrat Alois Rourauer, and praised Friends of Nature ideals. Even Pichl admired Rourauer's achievement of climbing Großvenedig at the age of 70. Surprisingly, Ernst Rüdiger Starhemberg, Christian Socialist, leader of the Fatherland Front, and Chief of the Home Guard, became a Friends of Mountain member in 1935 despite clearly having political motivations.⁴⁷ All these diverse Executive Committee members cooperated to develop their new association, even though they had competing political ideologies and goals with respect to former Friends of Nature property. Thus, the mountaineers' circle was a world seemingly beyond politics. One might say that the workers' culture that fostered strong relationships between liberal mountaineers cultivated their "political indifference."⁴⁸

3-3. "Political indifference" in nationalists

Even German-nationalist activist Pichl may have been "politically indifferent," paradoxically by way of his strong national identity. In his 1927 book, published after the July Revolt, he mentioned the names of young elite Friends of Nature mountaineers he held in high regard.⁴⁹ In 1928, when political conflict between German-nationalists and Social Democrats escalated, some "Austria" section members rescued Friends of Nature alpinists from a fatal climbing accident. Pichl expressed his condolences and said that it was very unfortunate for young lives to be lost in the mountains, regardless of political creed.⁵⁰ He regarded young mountaineers as valuable "Schutzherr"—"defender men"—of his "nation." Additionally, he also wanted to obtain the Friends of Nature huts, and indeed demanded their handover after the Christian Social Party government prohibited the association in 1934. He referred to the huts as the "Volksbesitzstand," or "national property" of Austria.⁵¹ In his opinion, ownership of Friends of Nature property reverted to Austria upon the association's prohibition, and thence to the "Austria" section, as representative of all mountaineering associations in Austria. The rhetoric of "Volksbesitzstand" also connoted that every Austrian regardless of class or political affiliation could use the Friends of Nature huts because they belonged to the Austrian nation.

⁴⁴ *Wiener Gau-Bote. Mitteilungen des Gau's Wien im T. -V. „Die Naturfreunde“*, 1919, Nr. 9/10, IV.

⁴⁵ It seems that most Friends of Nature members who joined during the interwar period following the trend in Red Vienna did not remain in the successor organization after 1934.

⁴⁶ President Sandtner said that Nemecek also came also from the Friends of Nature community (*Natur und Heimat. Zeitschrift des Österreichischen Touristenvereines „Bergfreunde“ und der Österreichischen Bergsteigervereinigung*, 1935, Heft 4, 49); In the Friends of Nature newsletter there is an article referring to "one of our leading members, Genosse Hans Nemecek": *Der Naturfreund*, 1917, Nr., 5/6, 64-65.

⁴⁷ *Natur und Heimat*, 1935, Heft 7, 108.

⁴⁸ Eduard Pichl, *Wiens Bersteigertum* (Wien, 1927), 129. In his book Pichl said Rourauer had been "im Herzen deutschgesinnt", a hidden German nationalist.

⁴⁹ Pichl, *Wiens Bersteigertum*, 129-131.

⁵⁰ *N. Austria*, 1928, Folge 4, 8.

⁵¹ *N. Austria*, 1934, Folge 5, 64-65.

Furthermore, Pichl changed his terminology surrounding “nation” under the Austrian Authoritarian government. In 1933 the Christian Social government banned the Austrian Nazi Party and suppressed German-nationalists because of their suspected links with the German Nazis, and the latter’s desire to annex Austria. Even though he may have supported annexation into Nazi Germany, Pichl used the term “gesamtdeutsch,” aligned with the ideology of the Christian Socials, instead of “allddeutsch,” a more German-Nationalist term, when proposing that Austria send athletes to German Olympics.⁵² On the surface, he became reluctantly agreeable to the Catholic faction of the Christian Socials. For him, sending an Austrian national team to the Olympics was more important than political conflicts between German-nationalists and Christian Socials. Pichl’s “political indifference” consisted of him identifying more with an ideal German nation than with party politics. It was partly opportunism, but also a strategy for surviving the dictatorship of the Christian Socials.

The meaning of “apolitical” came into question in 1924, when the “Donauland” section, established by Jewish members, was to be expelled from the Alpine Association. In the “Donauland” section’s newsletter, two pictures appeared of swastikas drawn on the doors of huts built by the Alpine Association’s “Linz” and “Radstadt” sections.⁵³ The “Donauland” section enquired whether those sections belonged to the Nazi Party. Pichl responded that swastikas were “apolitical” in Austria, and that the flag expressed pure patriotism for Germany, and defense against Jewish influence in Austria.⁵⁴

In 1930 when the Alpine Association’s Executive Committee was moved from Munich to Innsbruck, the Reichsrat (“Upper House”) in Berlin debated the apacity of the Association and its a-politicality now that it had crossed the border. At the hearing, a committee member asked if there was anti-Semitism in the Association’s Austrian sections. An Association representative answered that “völkisch” did not have a political meaning in Austria, and that its use had been approved by the Association’s Executive Committee.⁵⁵ Hence, we can understand how the Alpine Association put itself forward as legally apolitical through its use of “völkisch.” Even Pichl had to insist that swastikas were apolitical in Austria. If the Association admitted its politicisation and turned its back on its 19th century liberal roots it would have jeopardized its members’ inter-association benefits.

Mountaineers declared themselves liberal and apolitical while in fact bringing “völkisch” ideology and Anti-Semitism into the Alpine Association. In doing so, they maintained the cross-membership benefits that facilitated their mountain climbing. Such was the motivation for even nationalists to conceal their leanings with “politically indifferent” rhetoric.

3-4. The “Greater German Nation” from the viewpoint of mountaineers’ “political indifference”

As I mentioned above, mountaineers tended to behave pragmatically to further their mountain climbing. Did they knowingly subscribe to the rhetoric of a “Greater German Nation” to—somewhat cynically—preserve their pasttime? Tait Keller in a widely researched book asserted that the aim of most German mountain climbers since the establishment of the bilateral Alpine Associations 1874 to “open the mountains and foster a Greater German Community bound together tourism, the borderlands and nation building,” to promote “personal liberty, individual accomplishment, freedom and autonomy.” He criticized Amstädter’s view that “Alpinism draws a direct line of continuity from nineteenth-century German idealism to Anti-Semitism” and that the Alpine Association harboured strong “support of Hitler in the 1930’s.”

Keller asks why liberal Alpinism lead to Nazism,⁵⁶ pointing out “dissonances between the individual and

⁵² *N. Austria*, 1935, Folge 10, 1.

⁵³ The same pictures appeared in the Friends of Nature newsletter (*Der Naturfreund*, 1924, Nr. 7/8, 105).

⁵⁴ *N. Austria*, 1924, Folge 5, 6.

⁵⁵ *Mitteilungen des Deutschen Alpen Vereins*, 1938, 64, 112–113.

⁵⁶ Keller, 6.

collective.” He writes, “mountaineers endeavored to use the Alps to ease political divides by inspiring a collective cultural identity among Germans and Austrians,” even while “nationalistic tensions in Europe sharpened.”⁵⁷ For Keller, it seems that politics is distinct from culture, just as it was for the liberal alpinists. However, for mountaineers in the interwar period, politics was synonymous with culture, as well as a means to climb mountains.

Liberal alpinists brought politics into the mountains, revealing their axiom “do not bring politics into the mountains” to be hypocritical rhetoric. Even liberal-ness itself is political. In other words, mountaineering was always related to politics and culture in the broader context during the interwar period. While mountaineers were romantics and imagined a community transcending the boundary of Austria and Germany, they were also pragmatic, using rhetoric like “our brothers,” “the same blood family,” “solidarity,” “international,”⁵⁸ and “Greater German Nation,” when fundraising or showing gratitude for mountain hut funding. Political and apolitical languages were means to climb mountains. Mountaineering took priority over any “Greater German Community or Nation.”

Conclusion

Keller points out that non-nationalists also used “Greater German Nation.” By doing so, he asserts that the idea was accepted by a wide range of mountaineers. However, we should regard “Greater German Nation” as rhetoric. Mountaineers using such words may have seemed political or apolitical. History shows them revealing their pragmatism by switching sides when needed. Nationalist mountaineers and young alpinists alike used these strategies to preserve the benefits that enabled them to climb the most mountains. Before labeling them “politically indifferent”, recall Fritz Kasperek’s example of nationalism as “political indifference”. As Keller writes, “Greater German Nation” could be considered rhetoric rather than collective cultural identity. We should not assume a set meaning for “Greater German Nation”, but examine its use in each context. Keller’s work appears to be yet another study of Nationalism that focuses on identity politics, using the discourse of nationalists. However, it is also important to approach interwar alpine associations without assumptions of identity politics or grouping, if only to examine alpinists’ claims of political neutrality. Clarifying the continuity between Liberalism and Nationalism (and Socialism) reveals the social constructs behind these so-called “politically indifferent” people.

⁵⁷ Keller, 11. Keller presented three perspectives on the “dissonances between the individual and collective.” First, humans in nature: excluding women and workers from male-oriented bourgeois society; second, humans shaping nature: developing mountains while protecting nature; third, nature as a national symbol: the struggles of nationalizing the sacred Alps. All of them can be explained by pragmatism as well as the continuity between Liberalism and Nationalism. Keller seems to regard Liberalism aligned with independence and freedom as good, but Nationalism connoting Nazism as bad. He does not recognize the exclusivity of Liberalism (cf. Keller, 3–5). He also adopts the viewpoints of Three Camps Theory and conflict between classes (cf., Keller 50–51, 139, 147–149). Moreover, he writes of “ecoregions” instead of political borders and cultural communities (cf., Keller, 7). However, he does not refer to the concrete lives of local mountain people as in John W. Cole/Eric R. Wolfs’ *The Hidden Frontier: Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley* (New York, 1974). Therefore the meaning of “ecoregion” remains unclear.

⁵⁸ For example, the Corporate Charter in the German and Austrian Alpine Association 1874, Karl Renner’s speech at the completion ceremony of the first Friends of Nature mountain hut in 1907, Pichl using “brother” or “German blood” during the interwar years in contrast to the usual Friends of Nature “solidarity” or “international” in order to build mountain huts.