

A NOTE ON THE JULIAN ALPS

FEW readers of Dr. Kugy's delightful book *Alpine Pilgrimage*¹ can fail to have been tempted by the thought of visiting the Julian Alps whose charms he describes with such enthusiasm. A brief note from one who succumbed to the temptation this summer (1936) may not be out of place, especially as Dr. Kugy's book, which was written before the war, ignores the new political boundaries—a serious fact even for a mountaineer—and is innocently unaware of all the new topographical nomenclature which has followed the eviction of the old Austrian official names.

I had no time to visit the western end of the range which is in Italy, but I believe there is some very fine climbing in the Montasio district and that the normal facilities for tourists and mountaineers are available. Along the rest of the range the Italian-Jugoslav frontier, which follows the crest here, is rigidly closed to ordinary tourists, and the Italian authorities would seem to be much more concerned with military defence than with the encouragement of visitors. Nothing, however, could have exceeded the courtesy which, as the holder of a special pass, I received from the authorities on the Italian side in a short excursion down into the Trenta Valley from Triglav and back over the Vršič Pass. The finest side of the range, both from the point of view of scenery and of climbing, is on the Jugoslav slope, and there is plenty to be seen and done without crossing the frontier.

From the point of view of scenery the Julian Alps are all that Dr. Kugy has claimed for them. Their outlines are strikingly bold; the N. wall of Triglav from the Aljaz hut, though not much more than 6000 ft. in total elevation, is one of the most beautiful and impressive rock faces in the whole of the Alps. Škrlatica,² Razor, Jalovec³ are noble peaks even if they barely reach 9000 ft., and the fantastically jagged semicircle of the Martuljek Peaks is almost unique. The valleys are beautifully wooded, generally a mixture of beech, pine and larch, often with spacious park-like glades, and the contrast between their warm colourings and the limestone crags towering above is very effective. Many of the huts, especially Aljaz at the head of the lovely Vrata Valley and Erjavceva at the head of the Pisnica glen, are gloriously situated. Incidentally they are comfortable, provided with bedrooms, clean and well *bewirthschaftet*—I have had a lunch of Wiener Schnitzl and salad, accompanied by ice-cold beer and followed by Turkish coffee, at the Erjavceva which could not be bettered anywhere. It pays, even for a short visit, to join the Slovene Alpine Club

¹ *A. J.* 46. 428–31.

² *A. J.* 41. 75–88, illustrated.

³ *A. J.* 40 and illustration facing 179.

(Aleksandrova cesta 1, Palaca Viktorija, Ljubljana) in order to secure the reductions in charges allowed to members.

These huts really afford the best local climbing headquarters. As centres for a somewhat wider district, the best are Kranjska Gora and Mojstrana. For those who have to park non-climbing families who crave for other amusements, there is Bled on a lovely little lake with all the up-to-date 'attractions' of a Riviera resort, or Bohinj on a lake no less beautiful but as yet unspoilt and a splendid centre for training walks, both within reasonably easy reach of the climbing areas.

The Julian Alps are admirably organized for the 'hiker,' both because of the excellence of the huts and because there are well-marked and safeguarded routes over all the passes and up most of the peaks. But the mountaineer can find all he wants, both in difficulty and in length, up the alternative routes. In the few days I had available I climbed Triglav (N. face by so-called 'Slovene' Route⁴), involving 4 hours of excellent but not difficult rock; Razor, N. face, a climb of similar length and character; Škrlatica by the 'Kugyweg,' 6 hours or over and more difficult, and a short new ascent on Rupa. The rock is limestone and not always too good; climbing, as in the Dolomites, in *Kletterschuhe* and by chimneys and exposed faces, rarely by ridges. I found an excellent local guide, Jože Čop⁵ (pronounced Chop), who has made a number of difficult first ascents. I might add, in case there are any members of the A.C. who are not fluent in Slovene, that German is widely understood, but that a nod of assent does not always imply complete comprehension.

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⁴ *A. J.* 39. 136-8, with illustration.

⁵ *A. J.* 40. 180, 331.