



The Everest 50th Anniversary: 29 May 2003

Press Release, Mount Everest Foundation

Mount Everest (8848 meters) was first climbed in 1953 by the British expedition led by the late John Hunt. Efforts to climb Everest had begun a generation earlier with British expeditions from Tibet in the 1920's and 1930's. A route from the Nepalese side of Everest was reconnoitered in 1951 and at this time the mountain became open to international teams. Two Swiss expeditions nearly reached the summit of Everest in 1952 before the successful 1953 British Expedition and the spectacular ascent by Edmund Hillary and Sherpa Tenzing Norgay.

In 2003 the Mount Everest Foundation jointly with the Royal Geographical Society and the Alpine Club will celebrate that historic achievement on Mount Everest. There is also close liaison with the British Mountaineering Council and The Mount Everest Golden Jubilee Celebration Committee (Nepal) and the Alpine Club of New Zealand.

The Mount Everest Foundation sees the 50th anniversary of the first ascent of Everest as an opportunity to inspire young people and encourage more people to enjoy the benefits of the outdoors.

What's Happening In 2003

Endeavour on Everest: The Royal Gala Celebration

The highlight of events planned for 2003 will be Endeavour on Everest: The Royal Gala Celebration which is being staged at the Odeon Leicester Square in London on Thursday 29 May 2003. In the presence of Her Majesty The Queen and H.R.H. Prince Philip, this maybe one of the last chances to

hear the veterans from 1953 take us back to their experiences on the mountain: the ups, the downs, the excitement, the determination to succeed.

Veterans of the 1953 British Expedition will be joined by celebrities for an evening of drama, nostalgia, pride and joy. We will be shown unseen photographs and archive footage, replicating the tension and joy of the 1953 British Expedition. Key figures from the mountaineering community including Sir Chris Bonington will be joining the celebrations.

Tickets are priced £50.00 - £75.00 with profits going to the Mount Everest Foundation. Tickets are currently available by sending a cheque made payable to MEF Endeavours Ltd and a stamped addressed envelope to MEF Everest Events, c/o The RGS-IBG, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR

50th Anniversary Expedition

Led by Iain Peter, a distinguished British mountaineer, a team is planning an ascent of Everest following the same route and using the same resources to climb the mountain. The Duke of Edinburgh has agreed to be patron to the Anniversary Expedition which will aim to reach the summit in late May 2003. Channel Five in the UK is planning to broadcast two hours of programming from the mountain, taking audiences to the summit attempt.

Iain Peter, the leader of the expedition, commented: "This will not be 'just another ascent of Everest'. Not only are we following the same route as the 1953 team but we will be using very similar equipment. The ice axes, for example, were straight in 1953, not curved as they are today. It will be much harder

having to cut more steps and a much greater level of skill is required."

Everest: Summit of Achievement

The RGS-IBG is producing a book called "Everest: Summit of Achievement", which will be on sale from early 2003 as well as limited edition prints and postcards.

One Man's Everest

George Band is writing a book commissioned by Harper Collins, and officially endorsed by the MEF, Alpine Club and the RGS-IBG, to celebrate the climbing of Everest from the earliest days through to the 1953 climb and the most important subsequent ascents into the Millennium.

Dinner to Honour Sir Edmund Hillary

The Royal Geographical Society and the Mount Everest Foundation will host a dinner in early June 2003 to honour Sir Edmund Hillary and to raise funds for The Sir Edmund Hillary Himalayan Trust. Tickets for this event, which are priced at £100.00 a ticket to include dinner and a donation, are available by sending a cheque payable to MEF Endeavours Ltd and a stamped addressed envelope to the MEF Everest Events, Sir Edmund Hillary Dinner, RGS-IBG, 1 Kensington Gore, London SW7 2AR.

Special Edition Reprint of the Ascent of Everest by John Hunt

John Hunt's account of the 1953 Expedition is a masterpiece of its time and the Mount Everest Foundation, working with publishers, Hodder &



Stoughton, have produced a special edition reprint for the 50th anniversary. The reprint will be an almost exact replica of the 1953 edition with the original dustcover but will also fea-

ture a facsimile of the team's signatures.

As the momentum of interest in the 50th Anniversary of the first ascent of Everest grows, more and more activi-

ties are being planned for 2003.

For more information contact: Sarah Turner at sarahmalc@yahoo.com or visit our website at www.mef.org.uk



The Alps, a Model Region for the Mountains of the World? Fundamental Thoughts About the IYM 2002

Werner Bätzing, Geographer

That mountains are "sublime" and "beautiful" was first felt by Europeans long after they had settled between peaks and valleys. Today the Alps lie in an area of conflict between "Laptop and Lederhosen". Therefore they are no model region for the world's mountain ranges.

Although mountain ranges cover a quarter of the continental Earth's surface, although they have been in use as an economic area since the start of human development, although today one tenth of the World's population live in them and almost the half from them, their resources, they play rather a sup-



Farming on steep slopes. Those who nevertheless continue need good reasons

porting role in the history of humanity. Mountains in many regions of the Earth only allow extensive use, economy and politics designate them mostly as peripheral space. Culture,

power and business are normally concentrated in lower regions and the few advanced civilisations which came about in the mountain ranges (primarily in South America) were not granted any long-lasting individual existence. In the philosophies of advanced municipal civilisations mountains have little meaning; only a few

peaks are viewed as "holy" and as nationally important.

Also the Alps were perceived in this manner by the civilised European world for a long time, as montes horri-

biles - possessing no culture, uneconomic, horrible. Their conversion into a special positive landscape has taken place slowly since the late Middle Age (with Petrarca) and is closely connected with the European culture currents Renaissance, Enlightenment and Romantic. Simultaneously with the beginning of the industrial revolution in England,

the Alps were transfigured as a "terribly-beautiful" landscape and parallel to the development of the industrial society in Europe mass tourism took possession from about 1880. Our modern western society, which exploits nature immensely in day to day production, has an intense desire to admire the non-usable natural areas at least on Sunday. Natural aesthetic as compensation: This completely new aspect is first practised on the example of the Alps (as well as on the beaches at the same time)



and then applied to all other mountain ranges. In the meantime we take it for granted and no longer even notice that most non-European cultures see mountain ranges in a totally different light.

What are the Alps?

To view the Alps as "beautiful" leads to distorted and false perception for two reasons. Firstly an ideal image of a beautiful landscape follows definite

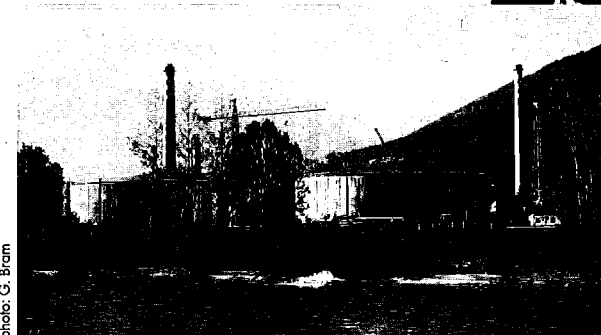


photo: G. Bram



photo: bookcover, around 1900

▲ The Alps as we like to see them (Matterhorn)

◀ ... and as we see them very often (Rhône Valley)

aesthetic principles from painting: in the foreground cultivated land, often with a farmhouse, fences, cattle and people in national costume and in the background the inhospitable world comprising cliffs, glaciers and high peaks. In many regions of the Alps - for example, at the edge of the Alps, in the French Southern Alps, in the eastern East Alps and in the inner alpine basin - the high alpine forms are missing; they are therefore not included as "real" Alps although they are definitely part of the Alps. Secondly "a beautiful landscape" describes a rural area in which towns and industry disturb the idyll and must, therefore, be excluded. In so far as the aesthetic or tourist viewpoint supplies a distorted image which has little to do with the alpine reality.

Analysing the Alps using economic and demographic data a less familiar picture appears:

- The Alps are no longer a disadvantaged area in Europe today. Since 1970 the population has increased in the Alps considerably faster than the European average: In the year 2000 there were already 14.36 million people.
- 59 percent of the alpine population live in towns or conurbations, partly at

the edge of the Alps. Here 66 percent of all working places are to be found while on the other hand 18 percent of the alpine areas are free from settlement from which people have withdrawn completely. Therefore, the Alps are an urbanized region with extreme geographical contrasts.

- Tourism, despite its high intensity, is not extensive in the Alps but is mono structurally concentrated in 600 communities (10 percent of all alpine communities). These locations are also going through a severe urbanization.
- Today the economy of the mountainous region, which has a central role in the idyllic alpine image, hardly plays a part economically and it is falling behind even more especially in the French and Italian Alps.
- The significance of the Alps as the so-called "European castle surrounded by water" is increasingly important. In view of the climatic warming water could be the most important resource of the Alps altogether in the 21st century.

Outwardly the Alps are extremely firmly networked with the modern economy and society. However, in-

wardly they display extraordinary contrasts between urbanization and freedom from settlement, over and under usage, modern and traditional values. Can this contrary development be found also in other mountain ranges in the world? First of all let us compare the Alps with the other high mountain ranges of the Earth and then with the German low mountain ranges (for the "Year of the Mountain" the 500 metre contour was selected as the limit).

No mountain range resembles another

There are many mountain ranges which at first glance resemble the Alps - namely all high mountain ranges in more humid climates with a glacial formed relief. Only high mountain ranges in the dry zones and tropical high mountain ranges do not appear "alpine-like" and therefore, seem foreign to us. The relationship between high regions and lowlands also plays a role: Whilst height in cool and cold temperate latitudes is definitely disadvantageous, it is advantageous in the subtropics (mountain ranges as rain

catchers) and tropics (not sultry). The Alps can, therefore, be regarded as typical for relatively many high mountain ranges on the Earth lying as they do on the borderline between the cool temperate zone and the subtropics (Mediterranean climate).

However, looking at the socio-economic development the differences are immediately apparent. Mind you here one has to differentiate strictly:

1. High mountain ranges in industrial nations

The uniqueness of the Alps lies in the fact that they are situated centrally between dynamic industrial regions. After 1970, these even moved very close to the mountains and directly altered them. The Alps are more closely intertwined with modern economy and society than any other high mountain ranges in the world. The Pyrenees and high mountain ranges around the Mediterranean are surrounded by areas lacking in infrastructure and the Scandinavian mountain ranges lie particularly peripheral - exactly like the high mountain ranges in the former USSR, USA and Canada as well as the "Alps" in Australia and New Zealand. Only in Japan do the mountains border directly on dynamic town regions.



photo: W. Bärzig

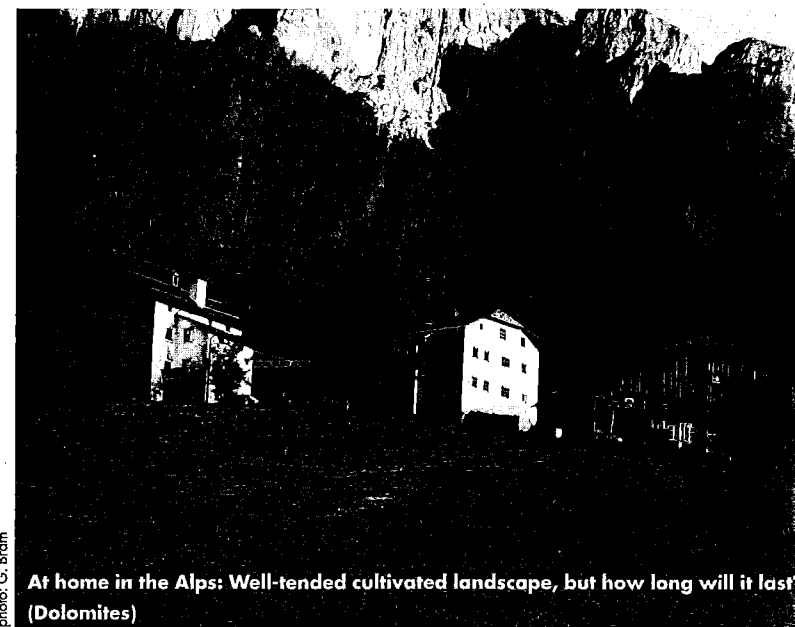


The second peculiarity of the Alps lies in their especially large tourist meaning and usage. The touristic structures are heavily formed by the traditional settler structures. A similar development with severe cut-backs has taken place only in the French Pyrenees and nowhere else. Also there is no traditional farming use and settlement in the non-European high mountain ranges of the industrial nations - they were working areas for hunters and collectors so that only a few tourist "islands" originated here in large areas which were not settled.

2. High mountain ranges in emerging nations

Here agriculture still plays an important role, totally different from the Alps. In the majority of high mountain ranges in emerging nations farming is intensi-

fied and expanded into overuse so that populations in the country and town grows. Whether the rural life will be eroded as in the Alps at a later point in

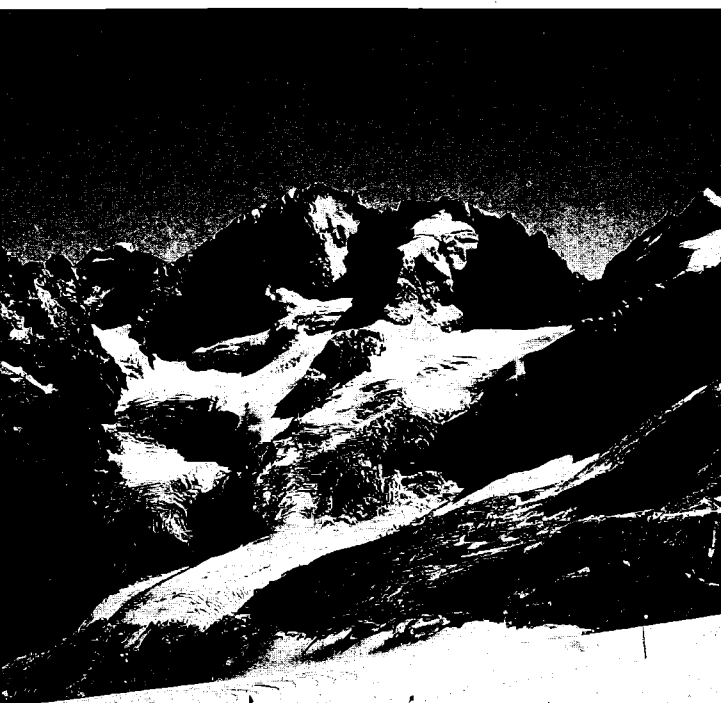


At home in the Alps: Well-tended cultivated landscape, but how long will it last? (Dolomites)

photo: G. Bram

time is yet unknown. We must guard ourselves, however, against the idea that emerging nations will follow our development, only delayed in time. In each case, modern industrial plants and regions, mass tourism (with few exceptions) and (because of lack of car mobility) commuter areas in the vicinity of the cities are missing here. Thus, the **Tourism on the high mountain increase: and the ranges in emerging town goes into the nations are not mountains (Val comparable to the d'Isère) Alps.**

And how is the comparison with the German low mountain ranges? The most important difference besides the much lower height of the peaks is their relatively limited extent. Therefore, in the past they were not able to develop independent economic and political structures nor their own culture - they were and are strongly and directly moulded by their surrounding countryside. However, a large similarity lies in the fact that in the pre-industrial age the low mountain ranges like the Alps were commercially characterised (mining and processing of minerals, glass and



duces their tourist attractiveness considerably and this can be seen in the low overnight numbers. However, day excursion traffic from the cities is as equally important as in the Alps. Although the Alps and the German low mountain ranges differ very obviously in their landscapes the economic similarities are larger than those between the Alps and other high mountain ranges of the Earth.

The Alps - a model for "sustained development" for mountain ranges of the Earth?

The "International Year of the Mountains" is supposed to promote sustained development in all mountainous regions in the world. The Alpine

photo: W. Bätzing



▲ Leisure time in the Alps: Running there, running downhill, running home. Traffic network is good

► Tradition in the age of globalization: Making bread, but there is no successor

textile production, charcoal extraction) and industrial locations have remained up to this day.

As here nature often places still larger obstacles in the way for humans than in the Alps, agriculture in the low mountain ranges has frequently receded more pronouncedly. Therefore, the low mountain ranges are almost completely wooded today which re-

alpine conditions are not exactly typical for most mountain ranges.

The Alps are no model for the future development elsewhere because they are a very special mountain range; agreement in individual points (urbanisation, collapse of agriculture, tourism) does not alter anything in this basic finding.

Aesthetic or tourist awareness of mountains convey a distorted picture which neither does justice to the Alps nor other mountain ranges and which must not be used as the basis for sustained mountain development. (The Alpine Convention contains starting points).

The exemplary conflict solutions between tourism and agriculture or between nature conservancy and nature usage practised in many places in the Alps are so firmly connected with central components of European culture that they cannot be transferred to other non-European mountain ranges. They can stimulate but not serve directly as examples.

The Alpine Convention, as a legally binding and country overlapping contractual system, appears to be a sensible



photo: G. Brann

Convention is often called a political example, which is completely sensible - but only when one considers that the

instrument to promote sustained development for many high mountain ranges. However, the concrete form of



Manang School is Thriving

Bojan Pollak, PZS



W. Bätzing

photo: W. Bätzing

Cooperation between the Alpine Association of Slovenia (PZS) and the Nepal Mountaineering Association (NMA) continues. The basic mountaineering course took place from 16. October to 12. November in Kathmandu and Manang. The course was executed using a revised program. 18 full time students participated with three instructors from NMA and two from the Alpine Association of Slovenia (PZS).

Since 1979 there have been 18 basic courses in cooperation with Slovenian instructors but the one held in 2002 was the first that followed the revised program. To achieve the title of NMA guide, one has to complete the basic mountaineering course, ba-



▲ Training on an Ice Wall
◀ The Training Course on Kang La Chuli

tures and practice in the climbing garden in Balaju took place. The lectures and practice were also executed during the march to Manang. The lessons in the school started on 28 October. On 31 October there

was a basic mountaineering course for NMA guides (according to UIAA Standards), meet certain practical requirements and complete at least one of the advanced courses. This program has been in principle accepted and confirmed by the NMA Training Committee and will be performed as such in the future.

This course was attended by 18 students, not counting the one who had to leave the course soon after coming to Manang because of pulmonary

oedema, and 5 instructors: 3 from Nepal (Lakpa Sherpa, Lhakpa Norbu Sherpa, the chief instructor, Kilu Temba Sherpa) and 2 from Slovenia (Bojan Pollak, leader of the course, and Matjaž Jerkezi). The NMA representative was Da Gombu Sherpa, who lectured periodically. He is the convener of the NMA Training Committee. The course started on 16 October in Kathmandu where the theoretical lec-

all photos: B. Pollak

the contents must be matched very accurately to the specific conditions. For the German low mountain ranges, however, a different political instrument is needed, for example, a local Agenda 21 at regional level or an integrative and independent regional development within the framework of the regional planning which has been drawn up.

Only when we Europeans understand that the Alps and our view of the mountains are not the measure for the mountain ranges of the world can the worldwide activities in the "International Year of the Mountains" bring enrichment to all those involved.

Werner Bätzing. Born 1949. Studied Protestant Theology, Philosophy and Geography. Professor for Culture Geography at the Erlangen-Nürnberg University since 1995. He published a series of papers concerning population and economic development in the alpine region which received considerable public attention. He lives in Erlangen.

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