Appendix: The Dolomites – how and why to devastate them?

(Editor's note: as the journal went to press, this statement was received from the Veneto section of the World Wildlife Fund (address: Via Riale 12, 36100 Vicenza, Italy). It is important enough to be included here.)

Cortina d'Ampezzo – Passo Falzarego – Lagazuoi – S Cassiano – Cherz – Settsass – Val Parola – Col Gallina – Cortina, Andraz – Nuvolau; Arabba – Passo Padon – Malga Ciapela – Forca Rossa – Val Franzedas – Passo S Pellegrino – Falcade; Alleghe – S Fosca – Zoldo Alto; S Vito di Cadore – Forcella Puina – Forcella Staulanza – Forcella d'Alleghe; Auronzo – Forcella Maraja – Col de Varda – Misurina; Monte Longara – Monte Fior – Monte Miela.

They are not the most famous Dolomite mountain places, but they are the areas that the Veneto Region (Venice) wants to disembowel by creating new ski-roundabouts. If the 'snow-plan' (*Piano Neve*) is unfortunately approved by the Region, then the natural richness and beauty of the Dolomites will be definitely jeopardized while we are still commemorating the second centenary of the discovery of their name, 'Dolomites'.

But this is not all, of course: dozens of new ski-slopes, ski-lifts, roads (even at the highest levels) and parking-lots will be planned. These and other 'necessary' structures (such as electric cables, phone-lines, new clearings and open spaces in wood and high mountain, building-yards, forest-roads) will involve much greater and graver consequences in the natural environment of the Dolomites: there will be hydrogeologic ruins due to the decrease of vegetal covering (cutting trees, shrubs, digging away the grass), with consequent increase of water surface-flow, impermeability of vast surfaces due to parking, roads etc, with alteration of hydrologic and, as a consequence, ecological processes.

Moreover, many hundreds of thousands of trees (mostly in tall-tree woods) will be knocked down; rock-crests and passes will be levelled; high-level environments jeopardized. These last are, perhaps, the most vulnerable: at first glance they don't look very important, but they include many species very precious and sensitive to anthropic pressure; just consider the typical alpine fauna and the very particular vegetal species that could be lost. These environments are a heritage of genetic richness and biological diversity, whose conservation must be one of the first aims of any long-term use-planning of natural resources.

Most of these 'exploitation' projects include areas designated by the Region as 'regional natural parks', 'highest landscape protection areas', or even areas declared of national interest by the Environment Minister: a famous case (much publicized by the Italian mass-media) is that of Monte Pelmo which has

been put under protection by the Minister. The Veneto Region and the other administrations favouring the cementation of the Pelmo have appealed against the Environment Minister's decree.

With regard to the other Dolomite areas named above as part of the Region Project, the situation is very similar to that of Monte Pelmo. In other areas (Alto Comelico, Val Fiorentina, Ampezzo, Cadore, Agordino, Marmolada, Sella, Zoldano, Alpago, Sette Comuni, Fiorentini, Lessinia, M Baldo) 'completions' have been planned, but again the final results would only be many new roads, ski-lifts, ski-slopes, digs, cutting of trees (even in re-afforestations). The kind of tourism that is proposed in these plans is incompatible with the peculiar characteristics of the Dolomites. Moreover, alternatives do exist, in the form of the nature-friendly tourism and the well-balanced and respectful forms of cross-country skiing and mountaineering that the environmental groups have been proposing for this region for many years.

We remember that, at the International Conference for the Protection of the Alps (Berchtesgaden, 9–11 October 1989), the Environment Ministers of the Governments of West Germany, France, Italy, Yugoslavia, Liechtenstein, Austria, Switzerland and the Member for Environmental Protection of the European Commission agreed to limit or to stop the kind of active tourism particularly dangerous to the environment and, on the contrary, to encourage the kind causing less damage to the natural vital basis (point 55 of the resolution).

The South Tyrol has already decreed a moratorium on constructing new ski-installations until 1992. It will never be too late for the Veneto Region to learn from others how to deal with the conservation of its natural resources.