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# Alpine Club Notes

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## OFFICERS AND COMMITTEE FOR 1995

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VICE PRESIDENTS .....	J S Cleare M A Fowler
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GUIDEBOOKS EDITOR .....	
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ANNUAL WINTER DINNER .....	Mrs G D Bull
LECTURES .....	S M W Venables
INFORMAL EVENINGS .....	S A Jones
MEETS .....	M W Fletcher
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AUDITORS .....	A M Dowler Russell Ohly & Co

### ALPINE CLIMBING GROUP

PRESIDENT .....	D Wilkinson
HONORARY SECRETARY .....	R A Ruddle

### GENERAL MEETINGS OF THE ALPINE CLUB 1994

18 January	Mick Fowler, <i>Cerro Kishtwar</i>
15 February	Stephen Venables, <i>Mountaineering in Five Continents</i>
12-13 March	North Wales Meet and General Meeting S A Jones, <i>Crossing the Greenland Icecap</i>
8 March	Nick Crane, <i>European Odyssey</i>
12 April	Chris Bonington, <i>Greenland Revisited</i>
10 May	Rannulph Fiennes, <i>Antarctic Crossing</i>
13 September	Jim Curran, <i>Kinnaur</i>
1-2 October	Lake District Meet and General Meeting Mike Banks, <i>Peak Bagging in Greenland</i>
11 October	Luke Hughes, <i>Jostling in the Street</i>
8 November	Mikhail Malakhov & Richard Weber, <i>North Pole Unsupported</i>
12 November	Annual Symposium and Meet: Plas y Brenin, <i>The Mountains of Siberia and Turkestan</i>
9 December	Annual General Meeting John Harding, <i>Turkish Ski Tours</i>

The Annual London Dinner was held on 10 December at The Great Hall, St Bartholomew's Hospital. The principal guest was Dr Jürg Marmet, President of the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research.

## CLIMBING MEETINGS 1994

20-21 February	ACG/AC Winter Meet, Glencoe
6-7 March	North Wales Meet and General Meeting
13-15 May	Derbyshire Meet
23 July - 13 August	Joint Alpine Meet with the ABMSAC and CC: Ailefroide and Courmayeur
1-9 September	Cornwall Meet - joint meet with CC at Bosigran
1-2 October	Lake District Meet

## HONOURS AND AWARDS

### Honours List

Congratulations to Doug Scott who was awarded a CBE in 1994 for services to mountaineering.

Congratulations also to Charles Wylie who was awarded an OBE in 1995 for services to the Gurkhas.

### The King Albert I Memorial Awards

The recipients of the first of these awards were announced on 14 June 1994.

They were presented on 3 September to:

John Hunt (Lord Hunt of Llanfairwaterdine)	Honorary Member, AC
Bradford Washburn	Honorary Member, AC
Wanda Rutkiewicz	(Posthumous)

### The Boardman Tasker Memorial Award for Mountain Literature

The 12th award ceremony was held at the Alpine Club on 19 October 1994.

The judges were Paul Nunn (Chairman), Sheila Harrison and Joss Lynam.

The winning book was *At the Rising of the Moon* by Dermot Somers (Bâton Wicks). Shortlisted were *We Aspired: The Last Innocent Americans* by Peter Sinclair (Utah University Press), *No Place to Fall* by Victor Saunders (Hodder & Stoughton), *Alps 4000* by Martin Moran (David and Charles) and *Among Mountains* by Jim Crumley (Mainstream Publishing).

## THE KING ALBERT I MEMORIAL FOUNDATION

King Albert I of the Belgians was killed in 1934 on a solitary rock climb at Marches-les-Dames in the valley of the Meuse. He possessed a deep love of mountains and had enjoyed a long climbing career in many parts of Switzerland and the Dolomites. Dr Walter Amstutz, an Honorary Member of the Alpine Club (and of the Groupe de Haute-Montagne and the Ski Club of Great Britain, also Honorary Chairman and co-founder of the Swiss Academic Ski Club, and a council member since 1942 of the Swiss Foundation for Alpine Research) had the privilege, when a student in 1929,

to be King Albert's skiing companion in Mürren, and during four subsequent summer seasons he joined the King on his climbs in various regions of the Alps. Walter Amstutz, who was deeply moved by the King's death, determined to create a memorial to perpetuate the King's memory. Although assisted initially by friends, the entire initiative and responsibility for establishing what was to become the King Albert I Memorial Foundation rested with Dr Amstutz.

It was essential that the Foundation should be linked with mountains. The initial task was to find sponsors willing to support an appeal for funds. King Leopold III who succeeded his father headed the list of donors. From small beginnings in 1938 and thanks to generous contributions particularly from Belgian and Swiss donors, Walter Amstutz's goal of setting up a capital of one million Swiss Francs had finally been achieved. Whilst capital gains and interest should secure its future, the Foundation, which is currently administered by a board of four trustees under the presidency of Dr Amstutz, welcomes fresh donations from individuals and institutions. Various objectives, such as a benefit scheme for dependants of guides killed in the mountains, and a training centre in Mürren for young skiers and climbers, were considered before it was decided that the Foundation should be associated with an international Award to be conferred on persons or institutions who, through their outstanding feats and achievements, have made lasting contributions to an area related either directly or indirectly to the field of mountaineering. Eligibility would include special distinction in scientific and artistic fields and the protection of the mountain environment. The Award, comprising a gold medal and a diploma, is presented at intervals fixed by the board of trustees.

The Foundation, which has adopted as its motto a maxim of King Albert I, '*La Volonté, la Qualité maîtresse de l'Homme*', presented its first awards at a ceremony held at Castelmur in the Val Bregaglia on Saturday 3 September 1994. Those honoured to be the first recipients were Lord Hunt, Dr H Bradford Washburn, and Wanda Rutkiewicz (posthumously). The ceremony was attended by 33 invited guests from Switzerland, Belgium, Britain, the USA, Poland, Germany and Italy. The events began with an evening reception at the Palace Hotel St Moritz on Friday 2 September in an atmosphere which set the tone of friendly informality that prevailed through the various functions that followed. After an introductory address about the Foundation given by Dr Amstutz, it was interesting to speak to Wanda Rutkiewicz's sister Nina and her daughter who had come over from Germany, also to Count and Countess de Salis who live partly at the Palazzo Salis, their family seat in the Bregaglia, and partly in Wincanton, Somerset. Dinner followed at the Chesa Veglia in a setting steeped in Swiss tradition and complemented by good food and wine. This was hosted by the Commune and Tourist Office of St Moritz, whose director Dr Hans Danuser's after-dinner address provided a thumb-nail sketch of the growth of St Moritz as Switzerland's top ski resort with a resident population of 5500

and about 50,000 annual visitors, the English having played a large part in its early history by instituting the Cresta Run in 1885.

The following morning in beautiful weather we left St Moritz by coach, halting on the Maloja pass to view the hairpin descent into the lush and fertile vale of Bregaglia. Arriving at the 18th century Palazzo Castelmur outside the village of Stampa, we were entertained to some delightful singing by a group of schoolchildren from Bondo and Soglio. The Award ceremony was a solemn moment conducted in the ornate Sala dei Cavaglieri of the Palazzo. The citations were read out in English by Dr Walter Amstutz who then invited the Countess de Salis to present the awards to Lord Hunt, Dr Bradford Washburn, and Mrs Nina Fies on behalf of her late sister Wanda Rutkiewicz. John Hunt's response of gratitude, in German, was movingly expressed, as were the expressions of thanks, in English, given by Dr Washburn and Nina Fies. After an aperitif hosted by the Bregaglia Tourist Office, we drove through rich chestnut forests to Soglio, where directly facing us were views of the Sciora group with Piz Cengalo and Piz Badile sharply outlined in the sparkling weather.

Lunch was held in the colourful garden of the Palazzo de Salis, originally built in 1650 and restored in 1701. An excellent meal was followed by a talk given by Albert Egger. The keynote was personal and informal, illustrated by vignettes of each of the Award winners. Bradford Washburn replied in words full of human appeal and of humour, which seemed to match the mood perfectly. The 'official' proceedings concluded with the presentation by Dr Amstutz's daughter, Mrs Yvonne Gozon-Amstutz, of souvenir 'awards' to three of the trustees of the Foundation, Albert Egger, Raoul Imseng and Dr Jürg Marmet, for contributing to the success of the occasion. It must have been a very satisfying moment personally for Dr Walter Amstutz, one in which his guests were pleased to share.

*Trevor Braham*

### THE ALPINE CLUB LIBRARY 1994

Several important developments have been considered in the five Council meetings during 1994.

At the end of 1993 it had been agreed in principle to computerise the catalogue system using a special Library package such as INMAGIC. Additional funds were being sought to pay for the computer hardware/software (£6400) and for the services of a professional cataloguer for, say, one year (£12,000) to load the 14-year backlog since the last published catalogue. Approaches over several months to charitable trusts and bodies, such as the British Library and the Foundation for Sport and the Arts, had proved unsuccessful, when the Pilgrim Trust came to our rescue in

November 1994 with a cheque for £6400 for which we are extremely grateful. This has now enabled us to order the equipment and at year's end it is being set up and we will start developing and loading the system using voluntary help.

Another area of concern has been the insurance of the collection which, with rising market values, is underinsured and does not provide special protection for the more valuable items. It was therefore agreed with the Club Committee that we should seek a range of quotes from our insurer for various levels of cover to protect the identified rarer books from the worst consequences of 'averaging' in the event of a claim. This required a comprehensive review of the more valuable books, which has been painstakingly carried out by the Honorary Librarian. This, in turn, led to a proposal, also agreed with the Club Committee, to dispose of several superfluous third or fourth copies of certain valuable books in order to create a readily available fund of some £25,000 to purchase desirable additions to the collection, which may come on the market at short notice, and for badly needed restoration of certain volumes.

No sooner had this policy been agreed than the unique archive of Col Howard Bury (leader of the 1921 Everest expedition), containing several items of extreme interest to the Club, came up for auction as a single lot in Dublin on 30 November. Although we were unsuccessful at the auction, the dealer who acquired the collection is being contacted to see whether any desired items would be available within our means.

The Himalayan Index is now being kept up to date by volunteers, notably Sally Holland, who has started to tap some of the less obvious sources of information. 2100 mountains, 3500 literature references and 4500 ascents or attempts are now recorded. In the course of 1995 the Index will be transferred to a modern database programme (Access), which will make it more attractive to foreign mountaineering associations.

The Library's investment portfolio, handled for us by Flemings, is oriented to provide income for about half of our annual operating expenses. Building on the success of the 1992 Appeal, a strategy to meet our future financial needs has been developed. This entails continuing efforts to seek renewal of expiring covenants and to encourage bequests, and a possible further approach during 1995 to senior members of the Club and to outside trusts, so that in the longer term our portfolio can be reoriented towards greater protection of capital, as well as providing sufficient income.

As always, the Library Council is greatly indebted to the core of volunteers supporting our professional Librarian, Margaret Eccleston. I thank them all, particularly Robert Lawford, Jerry Lovatt, Peter Ledebor, John Peacock and Livia Gollancz, our Archivist, assisted by Margaret Darvall.

*George Band  
Chairman of the Library Council*

## THE OXFORD MOUNTAINEERING LIBRARY

The Oxford Mountaineering Library, recently established within the School of Geography Library, is based on two collections: those of the Oxford University Mountaineering Club, and of the late Michael Roberts and his wife Janet Adam Smith, who had inherited many of the books from her father George Adam Smith (elected to the Alpine Club in 1886). When their son Adam Roberts, Professor of International Relations at Oxford, heard that the OUMC's books, formerly housed in David Cox's rooms in University College, and thereafter in various obscure cupboards, were in need of a new home, he suggested that the two collections should be joined to form the Oxford Mountaineering Library, and that it might be housed in the Library of the Geography School. Through the goodwill and enthusiasm of Professor Andrew Goudie and the Librarian, Linda Atkinson, this was realised, and the new Library was opened in December 1992, when David Cox and Janet Adam Smith spoke briefly about the collections.

The Oxford Mountaineering Library, which has a strong Alpine Club connection, contains books and journals on mountain travel and mountaineering in Britain, the Alps and beyond; it has already attracted gifts of books and of money which can be used for cataloguing, preservation and the purchase of books. It is open to all holders of the Bodleian card, so the books will be available to undergraduates who may find (as did David Cox and many others) that reading about mountains can inspire a wish to climb them.

Any AC member wishing to use the collection should get in touch with Linda Atkinson, Librarian of the School of Geography, Mansfield Road, Oxford OX1 3TB. (Tel. 01865-271919)

*Janet Adam Smith*

## ALPINE CLUB SYMPOSIUM 1994: THE MOUNTAINS OF SIBERIA AND TURKESTAN

A large audience of around 110 people attended the 1994 Symposium at Plas y Brenin and some 60 members and their guests stayed for the dinner afterwards. The successful Symposium was organised by John Temple, with help from Sheila Harrison.

**Opening Session** Dr Yevgeniy B Gippenreiter, Master of Sport, Mountain Guide and Honorary Member of the Alpine Club, presented a geographical and historical background to mountaineering in the countries of the former Soviet Union (with the exception of the Caucasus which had been the subject of a previous Symposium). His overview was masterly and prepared the audience for the scale and variety of mountain scenery described in more detail in the subsequent talks.

**The Pre-Polar Urals** Marian Elmes was about halfway through the Alpine 4000m tick list when a letter from a Siberian friend inspired a visit to the Urals. The area still being closed to Westerners, Marian had to be smuggled past officialdom disguised as a 'babushka'. Her cover was blown when the accompanying TV crew transmitted a live interview from the summit of Narodnaya, the highest point of the range. The setting was Arctic and very, very remote.

**Altai and Aksu** Mick Fowler spoke about two areas displaying sharp contrasts: the Russian Altai was mainly a snow range culminating in Bieluka (4406m), while Aksu contained formidable granite peaks sharing some characteristics with both Yosemite and Baltoro. The informality of the Aksu trip was in complete contrast to the earlier one, glasnost having intervened, but Russian hospitality and the high standard of climbing were unchanged.

**The Cherskiy Mountains** Paul Knott organised the first visit by Westerners to this, the central and highest section of a 1500km-long glaciated range in NE Siberia. Seven out of the ten mountains climbed by his party had not been climbed before and there were scores of unvisited summits left. Though not on an heroic scale, the mountains looked inviting in the low Arctic sunshine. Easy access by helicopter (at a realistic price) was followed by a formidable walk-out.

**Kyrgyzstan** Pat Littlejohn had visited Kyrgyzstan to assess the climbing potential of a country more than five times the size of Switzerland. The mountains ranged from the 7000m-plus giants of the Tien Shan to unnamed, unclimbed Alpine-scale peaks not far from the airport.

**Kamchatka** John Town demonstrated that this peninsula was a strong contender for the title 'Last Great Wilderness': he showed slides of geysers and glaciers, active volcanoes, forests, lakes and a savage coastline, which combined to produce some of Siberia's most spectacular scenery. The bad news was that the volcano John's party were climbing was dangerously active and unstable.

**Pamir and Fansky** Doug Scott described trips to different countries and the political earthquakes following glasnost which had transformed the way in which mountaineering is organised. One shot in particular – of a 'political' meeting at 15,000ft complete with KGB minder in suit and black homberg – emphasised the change. The tensions generated between an anarchic group of young (in those days) British climbers and the structured Soviet system were vividly recalled.

*John Temple*

## THE EIGHTH INTERNATIONAL FESTIVAL OF MOUNTAINEERING LITERATURE

Bretton Hall, Yorkshire, 18 November 1994

It was billed as 'Three Women and a Diemberger' but it was Kurt Diemberger who, reading from his latest volume of autobiography *Spirits of the Air*, stole the show with the charm and timing of an experienced storyteller. The spirit of Diemberger's romantic approach to the mountains and to adventure connected with an audience who might have been sceptical about his words on the cold page. His books immediately sold out, despite extra boxes having been brought by Diemberger from one of his famous international 'depots' somewhere near Oldham.

Alison Hargreaves opened the proceedings with a reading from her first book, about an Alpine family camping holiday on which she kept slipping away to solo a North Face until she had climbed six, which is enough for any summer. Just as, in *Alpine Holidays*, Janet Adam Smith wrote about bog-myrtle and soldanelles as well as about peaks, passes and glaciers, so the modern female Alpinist describes, in *A Hard Day's Summer*, some international incidents at children's playgrounds dealt with by her husband.

Alison Osius, Senior Editor at *Climbing* magazine, had travelled from the USA to give a lecture on 'The Art of Profiling Climbers'. The magazine's investment in this type of feature, allowing at least five days' talking and climbing with a subject, is repaid by the professionalism of the subsequent redrafting and editing. The success, and to my mind also perhaps the limitation, of this process is that the personal judgement of the writer may become suspended. As a result, subjects tend to be happy with their profile since they are allowed to speak for themselves. Alison's gripping biography, *Second Ascent*, of the double amputee climber Hugh Herr, is a perfect example of her tact.

The third woman was the young poet Kym Martindale who had again accepted the challenge of writing three poems for the event. Her clear and confident delivery always commands attention, not least because she captures the experience of the ordinary climber (such as the guilt of not climbing on a Sunday) among a galaxy of Festival stars. Gordon Stainforth arrived fresh from winning the picture book prize at the first Banff Mountain Book Festival for *The Cuillin*. His talk gave some clues about the dedication and endurance that lay behind this inspirational book. Gordon had brought back from Banff the award won by Dermot Somers' collection of stories *At the Rising of the Moon*. Gordon presented the award to Dermot's publisher Ken Wilson. Since this book had also won the 1994 Boardman Tasker Memorial Award, and its author was away in Nepal, Joss Lynam came over from Dublin to read one of Dermot's vivid stories. Paul Nunn, chairman of the Boardman Tasker judges, read his adjudication address, which so convinced the audience that the usual rigorous debate was not forthcoming.

The winner of the Festival writing competition was declared by Harold Drasdo and Gordon Stainforth to be John Penniford whose witty piece on a future access problem was read by Ian Smith and subsequently published in the December 1994 issue of *High* magazine.

*Terry Gifford*

*To receive details of future Festivals write to Terry Gifford, Bretton Hall College, West Bretton, Wakefield, W Yorks, WF4 4LG.*

## EQUIPPING CLIMBING ROUTES WITH BOLTS

Early in 1994 I attended a conference in Switzerland and talked to Swiss guides about their attitude towards bolting. Later in the year I had a short climbing holiday when I visited the Graue Wand, the Eldorado area near the St Gothard and other areas, all with Oswald Olz. All the climbs we did were protected by bolts. I asked various guides about this in a non-committal way and their response was entirely enthusiastic for the bolting to continue – they saw it only as an advantage, especially to their profession as guides. However, I was told by a very skilled female climber (not a guide) that in some valleys there was opposition to the Remy brothers moving in with bolt guns blazing.

After the conference I had enquired whether this was official CAS policy or the action of individuals. I was advised to write to Etienne Gross, Editor of *Die Alpen*, and in due course I received the following reply which I think all British climbers might find interesting:\*

Redaktion Die Alpen, CH-3074 Muri, Switzerland

Mr Doug Scott  
Chapel House, Low Cotehill  
Near Carlisle  
Cumbria, CA4 0EL, England

14 June 1994

Dear Doug,

Thank you very much for your letter of 8th April 1994. I will try to consider your questions and to give you an appropriate statement in different chapters.

### **The Swiss Alpine Club is open towards mountaineering**

First of all, the SAC does not consider itself as an institution determining the way to practise mountaineering. The SAC does not interfere in 'ethical' or 'ideological' arguments about 'correct' or 'incorrect' mountaineering and 'correct' or 'incorrect' forms of securing techniques (except for strictly technical matters concerning the quality level of security devices: the Club will recommend them accordingly).

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\* NB All the words and phrases in italics were italicised in Etienne Gross's original letter.

Mountaineering (climbing included) is a sports discipline everyone may practise as they like; the SAC simply provides the appropriate infrastructure, ie courses, excursions, alpine huts/refuges and equipment if necessary etc.

### **Equipping the routes**

Equipping the routes with fixed security devices (particularly with bolts) is an activity run primarily on *private initiative*. Indeed, individuals and groups with very different interests promote safety on a large scale: they may have a personal preference for a region or be authors of manuals, hut-keepers, course instructors, mountain guides, regional sections of the SAC or youth organisations (YO) belonging to them, associations of mountain guides etc. They secure the routes in a general sense – from climbing gardens up to major climbing itineraries. Anyone intending to improve the safety of regions with the best security devices presently available (eg bolts) will receive the necessary material, upon request, from the commission for sports climbing or the rescue commission of the SAC (note that the effort is not remunerated). After having completed the securing work, the author will establish a report according to the directives in effect.

### **Scope of securing**

The SAC primarily supports securing activities in regions having the topographic features of climbing gardens, as well as on some classic routes (great and popular rock itineraries and particularly delicate and risky passages on alpine routes). The Club does so by giving the appropriate material. There is no pressure from the mountain guides or any third parties. Most of the securing work is realized without the support of the SAC (at least today). It is not known to what extent the regional sections of the SAC or their youth organizations secure the routes or encourage such activities; route safety is indeed an aspect concerning the individual sections and their YOs.

### **Equipping the routes with fixed security devices: general approval**

Presently, the common tendency is that the SAC should reinforce its participation in terms of equipping the climbing routes. It does not mean, however, that any single climbing way (primarily in the alpine sector) should be equipped with bolts. As a matter of fact, *well and firmly secured routes are favoured and appreciated*. Anyone fixing the routes may therefore be certain to meet general approval.

There is no question that *a great majority of climbers will give preference to well and firmly secured routes*, that the *accident risk* will be significantly reduced and, should the occasion arise, the rescue operation facilitated accordingly.

### **The development of climbing techniques**

With the constantly growing number of climbers achieving their training on indoor walls, the ability to fix additional security devices (such as chocks and friends) keeps decreasing (as did the 'art' of nailing up before). *The climbers therefore do and will expect more and more completely equipped routes*.

In that context, it must however be said that regarding most of the routes, even the very recent chock devices do not grant absolute safety and reliability (ie the complete elimination of accident risk).

The battery-operated and petrol-driven rock drills used today have given rise to entirely new securing techniques: indeed, *positioning bolts has become so simple that they have rapidly established themselves as the cheapest, easiest, most efficient and therefore universal security device*. That development, which has also largely promoted the popularity of climbing during the past few years, will continue

just as other developments do. Most of the climbing routes will probably be secured some day, which would simply show that the chock devices are partially outdated, as they have been replaced by better and safer devices. *It is a very normal development: what is more effective replaces what is less effective.* And if an even faster, safer and more durable security device is invented, it will progressively succeed to the bolt.

### **Climbing as a sports discipline, 'ethics' and 'ideology' in alpine sports**

Numerous texts on 'alpine ideology' have constantly been published in alpine magazines, discussing subjects such as 'correct' and 'incorrect' mountaineering, the controversy about the 'ethical' principles according to which mountaineering and climbing should be practised and developed etc. *Yet mountaineering (promoted to the top by the young) has hardly ever been significantly influenced by such arguments in practice, as it follows its own development and rules. What becomes established is what is most successful, reliable and efficient and suits best the needs of the majority.*

Mountaineering is a sports discipline. And sports *are practised as safely as possible* – with a major or minor risk remaining, according to the discipline. Simultaneously, there is a tendency to practise it with a minimum of burden and problems in order to concentrate fully on its content (having fun or enjoying the performance by practising). Making additional efforts to get additional security does generally not fit into that concept, as the 'element of adventure' is not required there. It is up to everyone to find their personal 'adventure' in the content of their sports discipline. If the discipline – as practised at a particular stage – does not meet their expectations any more, the 'adventure' must be found elsewhere.

### **Minimizing risks – a basic principle**

Eliminating the danger wherever possible – even when the risks are required (eg in alpine sports) – is the overall and permanent objective of humans and the purpose of all efforts. They illustrate a basic human tendency to be safe. Otherwise, ropes, bolts, chock devices, harnesses etc would never have been invented nor developed. Risk and adventure would have remained greatest with a hemp rope around the waist as the only security device (an adventure everyone may still experience by free-soloing). Alpine sports disciplines have always met the idea of a standstill at a certain point; but that idea has never succeeded and will never succeed, *as developments overtake it.*

### **Conclusion**

- It may be possible to suppress the 'triumph of the bolt' in Britain for some time. It is up to British climbers. I would however question whether it is possible to disengage from a worldwide development in the long run.
- As for Switzerland and its neighbouring countries, I think that the bolt will establish itself as the presently most efficient security device. In fact, *the bolt has established itself as early as today.*
- Personally, I see no reason to fight in the name of some 'ethics' which are neither specified nor clearly delimited. Moreover, it is not consistent to suppress the development of security, whereas early alpinists have always favoured, required and encouraged such improvements. It is equally inconsistent to refuse a new security device which does seemingly not fit into a 'homemade' concept of 'ethics and adventure'.

Now, should we not rather start *questioning our own concept of 'ethics and*

*adventure*', as it is suddenly 'endangered' by a new security device? Would it not be more accurate to wonder why *we* have a problem with bolts? For there is an aspect which is easily forgotten: *only the person opposing the new security device has a problem with it*. The person using the new device has no problem with it. In other terms: is it not finally an attempt to shift a personal problem on others?

– The bolt is neither a topic nor a problem for the younger generation: *the bolt exists and they use it – what is all the talk about?*

– 'Ethics' which resist new developments are generally 'invented' by senior generations as a way to fight those new forms and to 'discipline' the young. If there is a problem with bolts – for Switzerland, I would say there is none – I think it is primarily a *generation problem*.

I do not know whether my (personal) statement answers your questions, but it will certainly provide a basis for possible talks. We should however be aware that such discussions may well be an interesting and enriching experience, but that they will not influence the development any more, the bolts being a fact today. All we do is perhaps running after reality – a behaviour which I think is typical when it comes to alpine sports. Instead of recognizing and promoting new developments at an early stage, there is a tendency to suppress them by hiding behind fortifications such as 'old values', 'ethics' and further ideological traditions. It does not mean that anything should be thrown overboard. Traditions are important. They are part of development and act as its dynamic principle. They must, however, merge with progress and not be used as a means to hinder it whenever possible.

Yours sincerely,

Etienne Gross

Editor of the Swiss Alpine magazine *Die Alpen*

I understand from subsequent enquiry that this letter is in line with the generally held view in Switzerland, and Etienne Gross is happy to have his letter published.

... And all the time we thought that climbing was about protecting *our own* lives and facing up to the uncertainty of being able to do that.

Doug Scott

## COMPETITIONS IN MOUNTAIN AREAS

My article on this subject in the last *Alpine Journal* was based on a Report, entitled *UIAA Policy Towards Competitions in Mountain Areas*, which I presented to the UIAA General Assembly in October 1993. The UIAA endorsed that Report which tried to take a fresh approach towards these issues, covering the range of opinions involved and recognising the extent to which competitions in mountain areas already exist and are seen by some as beneficial to mountaineering.

In 1994 the Working Group on Competitions in Mountain Areas (in collaboration with the UIAA Commissions and member federations) has continued to analyse the extent and effects of mountain competitions; and has also arranged for assessments of the two current proposals for UIAA recognition, ie ski-alpinism and the annual speed climbing competition on Khan Tengri.

This work has tended to confirm the view that, at least on a technical level, it should be possible to establish UIAA criteria for the assessment of competitions, in consequence of which the UIAA could recognise or organise some competitions as meeting these criteria. We therefore see the way ahead more as a case by case approach, in which competitions proposed to the UIAA would be assessed as to whether or not they met the criteria, rather than as a rigid policy either for or against all mountain competitions.

Accordingly, the Working Group secured the approval of the 1994 AGM to a compromise under which the UIAA would issue Guidelines covering safety and environmental aspects of ski mountaineering, and possibly other, competitions and their impact on mountaineering or on the locality. It was further decided that the UIAA would formally recognise the existence of ski mountaineering races in member countries and of a representative organisation to co-ordinate the running of international competitions in Europe (who would be offered observer status in the UIAA on a reciprocal basis). The UIAA would also continue to monitor the development of ski mountaineering races and, so far as possible, other competitions.

In the case of the 1994 Khan Tengri competition, the Mountaineering Commission had two observers who went to the summit at the time; but their conclusion was that in its present form the race is not compatible with the proposed UIAA safety guidelines and could not therefore be recommended. Instead, the Central Asian federations interested in high-altitude competitions were to be asked collectively to make proposals to the UIAA as to the best way to proceed in the future.

It was recognised that a great deal of practical work would be required during 1995 in distinguishing between those competitions which were likely to be acceptable under the new Guidelines and those which would not be so, or which would need modification. Furthermore, it would be necessary to obtain legal advice on any possible potential UIAA liability for accidents which might occur at events associated with the UIAA.

It was also decided that the UIAA General Assembly might review the representation of organised competitive sports and its relationship with other relevant bodies again in the future, perhaps in 1997, by which time the UIAA would have sufficient knowledge and experience of the operation of competitive sports for its membership to be able to reach an informed decision on whether or not to take formal responsibility for mountain competitions of all kinds.

*Alan Blackshaw*