Geomorphology of Europe

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Preface

This book has been compiled and written by members of the Commission on Geomorphological Survey and Mapping of the International Geographical Union. Originally proposed in 1976 as a text to accompany and explain the *International Geomorphological Map of Europe* (1:2.5 million), the outline of the book was prepared by the Commission at a meeting in Nové Mesto, Czechoslovakia, in 1977. Since then, there has been a considerable delay in publishing the *International Map*; meanwhile, work on this book progressed and has overtaken the schedule for printing the Map. At the same time, the book has been enlarged and its aims have changed to some extent: it is no longer envisaged simply as an explanation of the Map but as a work in its own right, providing the first comprehensive survey of the geomorphology of Europe.

The editor is well aware of shortcomings in the work and of unevenness of treatment. The original contributions were in many cases written in languages other than English; the sections on the USSR were translated from the Russian by J. Demek, that on eastern Austria was translated from the German by B. Bauer, and those on France were translated by the editor himself. Translation of technical works causes many problems, for literal conversion into English usually produces a meaningless result unless the translator is closely conversant with the subject matter. Even then, obscurities often remain and are impossible to remove wholly unless direct contact between author, translator and editor can be achieved. Unfortunately this is not only very time-consuming, but has not always been possible. There have also been considerable problems of postal communication, especially between eastern and western Europe. I should like at this point to pay tribute to Dr J. Demek of the University of Brno, without whose assistance and guidance this book would never have been completed. His knowledge of eastern European languages other than his own, and of German and English has been of immense value, and the editor has had invaluable discussions with him on numerous visits to Brno to clear up various difficulties. Other areas that have presented problems have been in the standardization of place names (whose spelling is far from consistent even in the major atlases), on how far to preserve feature names in the original

language (e.g., Giant Mountains or Krkonose?), in obtaining a representative selection of photographs and in deciding how many references to list.

The regional division of Europe employed in this book is based mainly on structure and to a less extent on relief. It should be recognized that it is an arbitrary division in many instances, and that the dividing lines are not hard and fast. For example, the separation of the Scandinavian mountains from the Fennoscandian Shield is in many ways quite unrealistic and arbitrary, yet there are major morphological differences between these two units. The divisions cut strongly across national frontiers, which has caused problems of continuity of treatment and of correlation.

The level of detail varies considerably from one region to another, and the lengths of individual sections are not in proportion to the area covered. This is inevitable, for far more is known about the geomorphology of some areas than of others, and some areas present a much greater variety of landform or of geomorphological history than others. No attempt has been made to standardize the contributions from different authors, although each author has been asked as far as possible and where appropriate to deal with certain basic topics such as relief, geology, structure, Tertiary and Quaternary landscape evolution, Pleistocene glaciation, coastal forms, etc. The several contributions reveal interesting differences of geomorphological thought and approach; in some the emphasis is on tectonics and tectonic history, in others on climatic geomorphology, while in others on the Quaternary. Some authors pay great attention to present-day processes of erosion; others feel that older events and structures are more significant in the present landscape.

This book, then, represents both an amalgamation and a compromise. It represents a considerable effort of international cooperation, and shows above all how much remains to be achieved in understanding the geomorphology of what is probably the world's most complex continent.

C. Embleton
Pedras da Rainha
Good Friday, 1983

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