

PETER WESSEL ZAPFFE



Parting with Gausta

BY PETER WESSEL ZAPFFE

The sides of the mountain tremble, gravel flies around, and splaying gondola towers rise up to the sky. The barracks encroach further and further, while hundreds of men chisel a sore the length of a mile into the giant's rib: next winter cars will be queuing up at Svineroi. Nature is subdued—not defeated in battle, but crushed by machines. The visitors that step out of their cars will get the summit served à la carte, together with their steaks. They think they are entitled to this—not so much thanks to their perseverance or their love for the mountain, but merely because of the size of their wallets.

The next thing is the extension of the cableway to the peak. It will provide “the public at large” with opportunities to enjoy. Enjoy what, exactly? The view,

of course. That of which we fall asleep when traveling by plane. But most of all they will enjoy the resort, their own presence, and each other's company. It was something the public at large could previously do as well, in front of the hotel or behind, but change makes people happy and so does *progress*. In the Alps some peaks can already “be done” in an unconscious state of mind. “Did you go up the Zugspitze, sir Nilsen?” “Possibly—we were fairly tipsy that day.”

Things change in the eye of the beholder, both in science and in everyday life. The Gausta summit that will now be made accessible, will be different once it *is* accessible. Most places have their forerunners. A man in Tromsø wrote: “Too few people enjoy the enthralling loneliness of Ørnedalen. Once the road is there, this will change.”

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Mount Gausta.

PHOTO: AXEL LINDAHL, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY

Below: Mount Gausta, 1979.

PHOTO: JAC BRUN, NATIONAL LIBRARY OF NORWAY



He was right. Now “everyone” can bus themselves to Ørnedalen. But what should they do *there*? For advertising has so many other “untouched” places to offer.

Saving you, Gausta, is no longer in the hands of a single human. He can only lament for your dying soul. You have been sacrificed by people who fear heights—in the landscape as well as in their own minds. If fresh mountain air can be transformed into compost in Rjukan, so can the golden morning glory around your summit be turned into jangling gold for hotel owners.

You will help raise a new generation, one that does not know that values stem from self-restraint, a generation that rattles around from “victory” to “victory,” without realizing that the price for this is the joy of creation.

Whether a later generation will rescue you from this degradation and remove the last rusty scraps of the dark age of technological naïveté—that we cannot tell today. Without hope, your faithful mourn. For them, your fate will be illuminated by the holy glare of tragedy: because you were beautiful, you had to die.