THE EUROPEAN
EUROPE'S FIRST NATIONAL NEWSPAPER

Reinhold Messner
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Provincia di Bolzano
Bolzano
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Dear Reinhold Messner,

With reference to your recent conversation with one of The European's photographers, G. Angelo Pistoia, I would like to confirm the appointment to interview you on Friday 25 June at 11.00am at Yuval.

I would also like to take the opportunity to give you some information about The European. It is a weekly newspaper which covers news, business, politics, events, culture and sport throughout Europe. It is published in English and is distributed in Europe. Its circulation is 250,000 per week and is published in London.

I look forward to meeting you.

Yours sincerely,

Ruth Sullivan

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EUROSTARS BY ARIANE
25 - 31 July

Aries
21 March – 20 April
YOUR ruler Mars makes forceful aspects to both Uranus and Neptune this week and you'll be in no mood to listen to colleagues who fear you are bulldozing ahead without due thought and planning. In fact, you can make great progress now – just don't expect to win any popularity stakes along the way.

Taurus
21 April – 21 May
THE goal you have set yourself is a tough one, but don't give up now. It may be an uphill struggle but Mars comes to your rescue this week, giving the project new impetus and you fresh enthusiasm to carry on. A financial reward by the end of the week is an added incentive too. Soldier on: you'll soon win through.

Gemini
22 May – 21 June
FINANCIALLY, you inevitably feel hemmed in and attacked from all sides but help is there if you swallow your pride and ask. After the 26th Mercury will again be on your side and you should be able to find your way out of this particular maze – and organise things so you won't have to go through all this turmoil again.

Cancer
22 June – 23 July
LEFT alone you are fairly content but it's doubtful that loved ones who depend on you will allow you such luxury now. Partners are keen to be on the move when you'd rather stay put, but if you want to avoid more shouting matches you might as well give in gracefully and go along with them. You might enjoy yourself!

Leo
24 July – 23 August
THIS is another week when your authority and beliefs are likely to be challenged. But, with the Sun in your own sign and Mars in support, you should feel a growing confidence in yourself. You are on the right track; just remember that working yourself to a frazzle can sometimes your view of life go out of focus and proportion.

Virgo
24 August – 23 September
THE emphasis is still on your

The great Italian mountaineer and explorer Reinhold Messner talks to ***Ruth Sullivan*** *in his medieval eyrie in the Dolomites*

PHOTOGRAPHS: ANGELO PISTOIA

A life devoted to peak experiences

THE morning sunlight pours through the castle window on to Reinhold Messner's desk as he corrects the manuscript of his latest book.

His eyes, bright with energy, betray none of the fatigue and stress of his recent 33-day trek across Greenland in temperatures which often fell 50 degrees below zero. Instead, the 49-year-old mountaineer and explorer is planning his next expedition – across the North Pole without back-up.

"It is the most normal thing in the world for me," says Messner. "To climb a mountain, to trek across a desert or a polar region, that is my reality."

The South Tirolean climber is one of the world's most famous and distinguished living mountaineers. He was the first person to climbed each of the 14 mountains in the world that is higher than 8,000 metres. He often climbs solo – including an ascent of Everest – and when not alone he organises his expeditions so that they need the minimum support.

On the Greenland expedition, Messner and his brother Hubert, a doctor, travelled 2,250km on ice. They often combined sails and skis, which enabled them to trek 170km on a good day. But at other times bitter winds confined them to their tents in temperatures as low as minus 30 degrees for days on end. Yet it is superhuman challenges like this, face to face with nature in a remote, silent landscape, which most delight Messner.

The feeling runs in his family – Reinhold and his seven brothers inherited it from their father. Born at Funes, near Bolzano in the mountainous Italian region of Alto Adige, Messner and his brothers were taught to climb by their father when they were children. This love for nature at its wildest has taken a tragic toll of the Messner family – two of his brothers died on previous expeditions. But even when not climbing, Messner stays close to his beloved mountains. His home, the medieval Castel Juval, perches on a dizzying crag in Kastelbell near Merano. The castle has an oriental air: statues of Tibetan and Indian deities stand in the courtyard. Inside there are Tantric masks, Nepalese murals and a chapel with prayer flags and Buddhas.

Blackbeard's castle: Messner does all the restoration work himself

Messner feels that cultures and religions should co-exist in harmony. He describes himself as a pantheist and says: "If nature is God then that is perfect for me."

Below the castle there is a clutch of farm buildings which belong to Messner. He makes wine and meat and dairy products which he sells in local markets. His livestock includes a herd of Tibetan yak which can only survive at high altitudes. One is named after the Italian footballer Toto Schillaci, because, Messner explains, "he has the same fiery eyes".

Messner spends half of each year on expeditions and the remaining six months are given over to writing and restoring the castle where he lives with his family. He bought it, semi-derelict, ten years ago and does the restoration work himself. He hopes to finish the last section in two years and will then move out and open it to the public. Another challenge completed and on to the next.

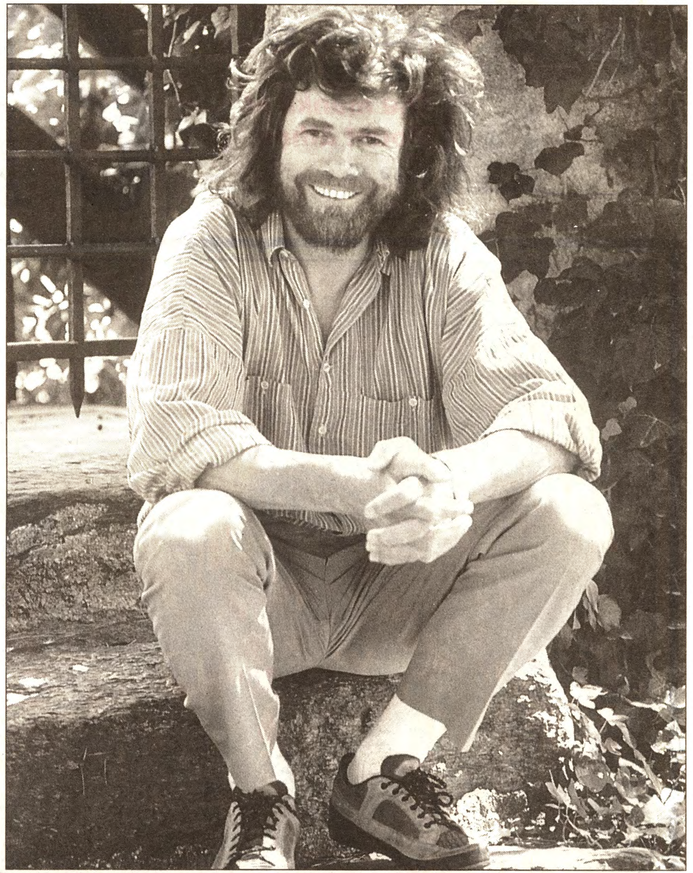
So what makes Messner tick?

"Reality is what interests me," he says. "I am an explorer of my own soul and I embark on these dangerous situations to know more about reality, about leadership, about myself."

Messner is drawing on these experiences for his current book. Aimed at business managers, it gives advice on motivation, leadership, discipline, co-ordination and group strategies.

"It is more dangerous to be a manager than a mountaineer because managers do not see the dangers. They don't feel the heart attack coming, while in the mountains you see the dangers clearly," Messner jokes.

Like all successful mountaineers, Messner has had to become an expert self-publicist in order to promote his work and find the hefty financial backing which his expeditions require. He rejects criticism of a recent advertising campaign in which he promotes a brand of mineral water: "My capital is my credibility and that is what they want to buy. I find this an interesting market," he says.



Messner at 49: 'I embark on these dangerous situations to know more about reality, about myself'

In his media career Messner has not shied away from controversy, sometimes of the most bizarre kind.

In 1986 he informed British journalists that he had encountered the "abominable snowman", the legendary half-human, half-animal Yeti, but he refused to say where or when.

In 1992, after the discovery of a 5,000-year-old corpse, later nicknamed Ötzi, under a glacier high in the Alps between Austria and Italy, Messner caused another stir by saying that the remains belonged to Italy because they had been found 30m inside the Italian border. Messner has several expeditions planned. He wants to celebrate his impending 50th birthday by crossing the North Pole. He is planning to go with his brother Hubert from Siberia to Canada without back-up. "I'm not so strong for rock climbing but I'm at my peak for walking," he says.

Perhaps Messner's philosophy is best summed up by the title of one of his books: *The Freedom to Go Where I Want*.