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## Remembering two pioneers of Alpine geodynamic research



Hans Laubscher, Professor emeritus of Geology at Basel University passed away on July 2nd 2015 in Riehen, Basel. Laubscher was a leading tectonician and one of the great Alpine geologists of our time – the Alps including the foreland thrust-and-fold belt of the Jura Mountains. He was a member of SASEG for many years and frequently involved in its annual conventions and the accompanying excursions. An obituary has been published in the *International Journal of Earth Sciences* (BERNOULLI & HANDY 2016).

The photograph shows Hans Laubscher (left) together with his friend and colleague Peter Bearth (1902–1989), taken during an excursion in the Jura Mountains at the occasion of Laubscher's 60th birthday (1984).

Laubscher and Bearth shared a common interest in the ophiolites, the rocks that best document the effects of deep-reaching Alpine subduction.

In 1934, Peter Bearth began his extensive fieldwork across the high mountains of the Monte Rosa massif. Climbing rock and glacial summits mainly unaccompanied, he mapped the entire Penninic region between Zermatt and Simplon, in total six sheets of the *Geologischer Atlas der Schweiz 1:25'000* (DAL PIAZ 2001). During mapping in the Zermatt area, Bearth got involved in the study of the ophiolites, mainly of their petrology and metamorphism, and was one of the first to find the traces of high-pressure metamorphism in these rocks, that were overprinted

by later greenschist metamorphism; «his» eclogitic pillow lavas of the Zermatt area became an icon of Alpine geology. In turn, in the late 1960ies, Laubscher, who had accompanied Bearth on his excursions, was probably the first to apply the concepts of the newly evolving plate-tectonic paradigm to the Alps and to interpret the ophiolites as the relics of oceanic crust and lithospheric mantle of the Alpine branch of a larger Mesozoic Tethys Ocean, fallen victim to subduction during the convergence of Africa and Europe during the Cretaceous and the Tertiary. The subduction of oceanic lithosphere and of coherent slices of continental crust and the peeling-off and the accumulation of the upper crust and overlying sediments in basement and sedimentary decollement nappes had far-reaching consequences, in particular in the evolution of the foreland fold-and-thrust belt of the Jura Mountains, Laubscher's main area of field work. Bearth and Laubscher were unconventional and genuine personalities, generously sharing their knowledge with a generation of younger geologists; both left a prominent mark in Alpine geology.

### **Daniel Bernoulli, Giorgio Vittorio Dal Piaz**

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