

India

Nilkantha, Garhwal. An Indian expedition finally succeeded in climbing beautiful 21,640-foot Nilkantha, which had repulsed seven previous attempts, including Willi Unsoeld's try in 1949. (*A.A.J.*, 1956, 10:1, pp. 75-80.) The expedition was under the leadership of Captain Narinder Kumar and consisted of Flight-Lieutenants A. K. Chowdhury and A. J. S. Grewal, Captain Mulk Raj, O. P. Sharma and Lieutenant R. C. Ray. They left Joshimath on May 30 and passed through Badrinath on the way to set up Base Camp at 15,000 feet on the Santopanth Glacier on June 3. Immediately they set about reconnoitering routes. Although they established camp at 18,000 feet on the west col, they could find no route on the west ridge and decided in favor of the north face. They placed Camp I at 16,500 feet on June 6 and Camp II at 18,000 feet the next day. Above Camp III, which was at 20,000 feet, they had a 150-foot vertical ice wall, which cost them considerable effort before they established Camp IV 600 feet higher on June 11. In bad weather they placed Camp V the next day at 21,200 feet. Early on June 13 Chowdhury and two Sherpas worked in a heavy snowstorm to help prepare the route. After their return at 10:30 A.M., O. P. Sharma and the Sherpas Phurba Lobsang and Lhakpa Gyalbu Lama set off towards the summit, which they reached at 5:15 after seven hours of difficult climbing in bad weather. They were benighted during the descent and had to spend the night out. The next day they returned to their companions, Kumar, Chowdhury and two other Sherpas, at Camp V and together the whole party retreated to Camp IV, still in miserable weather; all suffered frost-bite. After finding a new route down to Camp III, they descended further, finally reaching Base Camp on June 17 despite the serious frost-bite, which affected Captain Kumar most severely.

Attempt on Nanda Devi, ascent of Devistan I, Maiktoli, and Trisul, Garhwal. Our trip this year was the sequel to a reconnaissance we had made to the Nanda Devi area last summer; it was financed by the Indian Mountaineering Foundation, the Mount Everest Foundation and the *Statesman* newspaper. The six members were Gurdial Singh and I of the Doon School, Major John D. Dias, Captain K. N. Thadani and Lieutenant (Dr.) N. Sharma of the Indian Army, and Suman Dubey, an undergraduate at Delhi. We hired three Sherpas, Kalden, Nima and Lhakpa, from the Sherpa Climbers' Association, Darjeeling. On arrival at the roadhead at Joshimath on May 1, we discovered that most of our arranged porters had been hired by other parties and on road-construction projects, but we managed to obtain some twenty porters, against an estimated requirement of seventy. With these, we marched upstream to reach the last village

on our route, Lata, after two days. A stiff 5000-foot climb takes one to the grazing alp of Lata Kharak, where we were surprised to find that the early season and late spring snow had covered the route from the Lata Kharak Camp to Dharansi Pass (14,000 feet) under deep snow. After three attempts, we eventually managed the crossing, the porters ferrying the loads over to Dharansi Camp (13,600 feet) across the pass in a week's time. This delayed our already stretched-out approach march, as even normal stages took two days because our restricted number of porters had to relay the loads. From Dharansi to Dibrugheta (11,400 feet), to Deodi (13,000 feet) and to the foot of the gorge at Ramani (11,640 feet) took us another week, and the remaining portion of the march, up the difficult gorge and to the Base Camp of Nanda Devi on an ablation shelf (c. 16,000 feet), another ten days. From Base Camp on this terrace above the right bank of the Southern Nanda Devi Glacier, we set out on June 3 to establish Camp I. The route is up steep scree, crumbly shale and schist, and one has to surmount a cruelly weathered and serrated ridge known as the "Coxcomb" to reach a steep rock ridge which merges into the south ridge of Nanda Devi at about 20,000 feet. We ferried all needed loads to Camp I, a frightfully insecure site where we sacrificed a kettle, a mug and sundry articles of food and equipment to the laws of gravity. The conditions on the southeast ridge were bad, late spring snow now turned to ice, making the route treacherous and arduous. Despite three attempts, we could find no trace of the solitary site for two tents which this ridge afforded to our predecessors, the Anglo-American party of 1936, the French in 1951 and Major N. D. Jayal in 1957. On the fourth attempt, though we examined every inch of the steep ice and ice-glazed rock, not even the most imaginative could descry a potential tent platform on that inhospitable ridge. While we debated the next step, the first monsoon storm of the season boiled over the Sundardhunga Col to the south. A member and a Sherpa in quick succession suffered falls on the *vevglas*, both being saved through great good luck by rocky outcrops. We turned back. That night, the next and the next it snowed.

Back at Base Camp, we decided to attempt Devistan I (21,910 feet) on the western rim of the Nanda Devi Sanctuary. We moved Base Camp to a flat terrace in the grasslands of the Sanctuary at 15,000 feet and established two camps higher at 17,500 and 20,000 feet. From this last we started at eight A.M. on June 16 and climbing steadily up snow and later, up steeper ice slopes, we reached and surmounted the summit cornice to look down the other side into the Trisul Nala at about two P.M. No great technical difficulty was encountered, but the ascent, accomplished by all the members and the Sherpas except for Captain Thadani and Lhakpa

along with the Garhwali Kalyan Singh, was interesting. On returning to the new Base Camp, it was decided to climb the once-ascended (Shipton in 1934) Maiktoli (22,320 feet) on the southwestern corner of the Sanctuary. We again established two camps, one on a rock moraine at 16,000 feet above the left bank of the Maiktoli component of the Southern Rishi Glacier and another up the Maiktoli icefall at about 18,800 feet. The attempt was made by all nine of us on June 21 on a clear morning, but by midday monsoon clouds swelled up from the south and we reached the summit in raging sleet. Finding our way back proved most difficult even after a long halt in the futile hope that visibility, reduced to a few yards on that misleading glacier-face, would improve. After a day spent at Camp II to allow cases of snow-blindness, caused by the removal of glasses in the mist, to subside, we trudged back to the Sanctuary Camp.

There being sufficient supplies for another week, we decided to climb Trisul (23,360 feet) by the light of the full moon around the end of June. We came down the Rishi gorge and followed the Trisul Nala up to an ablation valley on the left bank of the Trisul Glacier at 16,000 feet on July 27. From here Dias and I with Bahadur Singh and Nima set up a camp on rock at 18,000 feet, while Captain Thadani with the Sherpa Lhakpa and a Garhwali porter, Kalyan Singh, set up camp at about 19,500 feet for a conventional daytime attempt. Storms arose in the evening, and the lower-camp inmates abandoned the idea of a moonlit night climb, while the higher-camp party reached the summit in the daytime of June 30. That same night, at Base Camp, the climbers keen on a night attempt saw the sky become clear and the moon rise at 8:30 and impulsively set out in an attempt from Base Camp itself. Climbing rapidly, they were past 21,000 feet by four A.M., only to be turned back half-an-hour later by a sudden monsoon storm which rose over from the Kumaon hills to the south. The expedition reached Dehra Doon on July 12 after many delays due to the breaches on the motor road below Joshimath. Future expeditions to this area are bound to find the organization very tricky because of the acute shortage of porters resulting from the rising employment opportunities provided by the government to the local hillmen.

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Nanda Ghunti, Garhwal. Nanda Ghunti (20,700 feet) was climbed for the second time by an Indian expedition which attacked it from the Rishi gorge north of the peak. On October 22, 1960 the leader, Sukumar Roy, Dilip Banerjee, and the Sherpas Ang Tsering, Pembu Norbu, Ajeeba