

reach Base Camp at 17,000 feet in continuous rain and sleet. They crossed the Mangde Chu Glacier moraines to Advance Base at the foot of the mountain. Camp I at 20,500 feet was on a ridge at the head of a gully, a single tent at a precarious angle. Wind confined climbers there for two days before they descended to Advance Base. After a break in the weather, they returned to Camp I and set up Camp II at 21,500 feet. After reaching 22,500 feet, they were repulsed by strong winds. Food was running out as yaks could not reach Base Camp in deep snow. At the request of the Bhutanese government, Indian Army helicopters dropped food. Finally the members were airlifted to Paro.

KAMAL K. GUHA, *Editor, Himavanta, India*

Jichu Drake, First Ascent to the Main Peak. After an unsuccessful attempt on the southeast ridge by Japanese ladies in the pre-monsoon season of 1983, Austrians climbed to the lower south summit by the southwest ridge (*AAJ, 1984*, pages 224-5). In May of 1984, Japanese climbed the southeast ridge but again went only to the south summit (*AAJ, 1986*, page 210). During the autumn, an Italian expedition attempted this elegant line, but tragically two climbers were hurled down the east face when the crest of the ridge broke away. (*AAJ, 1985*, pages 244-6). On May 5, our group arrived at Thangothang. Our camp obviously made a good base for exploring the western side of Jichu Drake. Even though the mountain is only 22,277 feet high, we would still have to acclimatize during the next two weeks and that is what we did, first on the west, then on the east and finally on the south of the mountain. On one long day on May 7, we moved up the moraine of the South Jichu Drake Glacier to where it merged with icefields coming down from the western side. We could see only two-thirds of the western ribs reaching up into the clouds. Although the reconnaissance was inconclusive, we moved camp to check out the east side. The day before departure, Victor Saunders severely strained his ankle, but he set off with us, riding a horse. We eventually set up camp at 14,000 feet on a beautiful oval lake below the east side. During the next week, we pitched a camp on the rocky ridge that separates the two glaciers that come down from the east face of Jichu Drake. It looked steep, seeing it head on, and dangerous with huge mushrooms of snow barring the way at several places. The only possibility seemed to be up the south face. We established Advance Base on a lovely lake nestling in the rocks at 16,000 feet. Whilst the rest of us brought up more supplies, Neil Lindsay and Lindsey Griffin carried out a superb reconnaissance of the approaches to the south face and reached a point just below the plateau and most of the way through the icefall that tumbles down toward the South Jichu Drake Glacier. A few days later, we established Camp I at 18,000 feet on the great ice shelf. We retreated to Base Camp for a rest before the actual climb. On May 24, we left Base Camp for Advance Base. Saunders was hobbling on his ankle, Griffin had a torn shoulder muscle, Sharu Prabhu had stomach trouble and I was trying to combat old age. Only David Rose was fit, but he was on his first Himalayan expedition as a reporter for the *Guardian*. Sharu Prabhu was an Indian who had

PLATE 57

Photo by Doug Scott

**Southeast Ridge of JICHU DRAKE.
Main Peak on the right.**



climbed to 24,000 feet with the Indian expedition to Everest in 1984 and she had been to 25,000 feet with us on our northeast-ridge Everest expedition. Neil Lindsay had to leave for home. On May 26, we broke trail in sweltering heat to the base of the south face and traversed a mile in dense fog. We had to find a camp site nearby. In the morning, we set out rather late and saw we had no hope for reaching the only likely bivouac site some 2000 feet higher. We settled for leading out and leaving our four ropes for the morrow. Back in the tents, by one o'clock we were hammered by the usual afternoon storm. On May 28, we were away by 4:30, moved rapidly up to the bergschrund and up the four rope-lengths. The next pitch was steep with a vertical step of hard green ice. At one o'clock, Saunders expressed doubts about continuing, but I suggested we should take a diagonal line for the southeast ridge and a possible bivouac site. By the eighth pitch, the storm was very violent and the snow was pouring down the face in waves. We were still two pitches from the southeast ridge. Just as the sun was setting, Saunders reached the ridge. I led up the heavily corniced ridge for 100 meters to a flat part of the cornice, where we hacked out space for our bivy tents. The next morning, Saunders and I found a better camp site some 500 feet higher, protected by a steep bulge in the ridge. Later that day, we all moved up, occupying what was probably the final Japanese camp, having joined their route on the ridge. Griffin had not been sleeping well and Rose felt that we three others could make faster progress if he stayed with Griffin. Sharu Prabhu, Victor Saunders and I were off at 2:30 on May 30. From time to time we came across Japanese rope. The twelfth pitch took us to the south summit, where we found the end of the Japanese line. We still had to descend 100 feet on the corniced ridge and climb 1000 feet of easy snow slopes on the west side of the higher north summit. By midday we were on the summit (6790 meters, 22,277 feet). We had to concentrate all our thoughts on the tricky descent, making one awkward, often diagonal abseil after another to arrive in Camp IV just before dark. The next day, after down-climbing two pitches and abseiling twelve full rope-lengths, we were back on the glacier.

DOUGLAS SCOTT, *Alpine Climbing Group*

India—Sikkim

Forked Peak and Kabru Dome Correction. Page 184 of *AAJ, 1988* carried an account about Major K. V. Cherman's expedition's ascent of Rathong, which also claimed the ascents of Forked Peak and Kabru Dome. An enquiry for details of the latter two ascents brought forth a surprising letter from Major Cherman, who writes, ". . . It is true that the team reached only 70 meters in altitude and 300 meters in distance short of the Kabru Dome summit and 40 meters in altitude short of the Forked Peak summit." While we are glad that Major Cherman has corrected the record, we find it strange that he should have reported these two non-ascents since he was a "summitter" himself on Kabru Dome.

SOLI S. MEHTA, *Editor, Himalayan Journal*