

days for 760 meters. It was VIII- compulsory free climbing plus some sections of A2/A3. Some bolts were placed at belays. The route was rappelled. This valley offers great opportunities for rock climbing on unknown and unclimbed summits

Later, Giordani and Villa had to return home. Maspes and Lanfranchi went to the Honbrok Valley. They climbed a peak called Ibrahim Peak, which lies about two days' walk from Hushe. Rotten rock and easy scrambling led to the summit. The valley offers little possibilities for rock climbing. Cigarette Peak (local Hushe name) at the end of the valley appears interesting for ice climbing, but only above a nasty and dangerous, very broken glacier crossing. The local guide Little Karim was with the team in both valleys.

EMANUELE PELLIZZARI

Amin Brakk, West Face, Attempt. The team members of the Korean Alpine Club Amin Brakk Expedition were Young Soon Hwang, Jung Ho Bang, Dong Chul Shin, Myoung Rae Kim and Ihn Soo Park. The team departed Seoul May 22 and established Base Camp at 4200 meters on May 30. The first portaledge camp was set up on June 13 at 5250 meters. On June 18, the second portaledge camp was established at 5450 meters, and the next day, all members bivouacked at 5700 meters. On June 20, Young Soon Hwang, Jung Ho Bang and Ihn Soo Park reached 5800 meters. They had climbed 24 pitches to this point, fixing rope from the start of the climbing at 4800 meters to the bivouac point at 5700 meters. The most difficult pitch had been a five-tiered roof (A4) above the first portaledge camp at 5250 meters. At 5650 meters, they found a blue haulbag and a 35-liter rucksack from the 1996 Spanish team's attempt in which a 10.5mm rope, Friends, belay seat, climbing clothes and a 16mm video camera were packed. Mr. Hwang asked their Pakistan cook, Ssadic, to give the video camera to the Spanish team's leader. But the other equipment in the bag was left where it was found. The team also found several carabiners clipped to pitons below 5650 meters that they exchanged for their Korean Trango carabiners.

On June 21 at noon, they decided to descend because of heavy snowfall and strong winds. Mr. Hwang said it was very hard to decide to descend, but one of his members, Jung Ho Bang, was in too poor condition to attack the summit. Mr. Hwang said, "When I decided to give up on the summit with only 100 meters to go, it reminded me of a phrase from Joe Tasker's book, *K2*. Tasker wrote, 'Though we could not ascend the summit of K2, we knew that the most important thing is not [the] peak but the long distance traveled [. . . toward] K2 itself.'" At 5800 meters, they left a bolt and a cam nut. On the descent, they left 20 Trango carabiners, taking the Spanish (Bonati) carabiners in their place. They also left a hanging cook set (because it was cracked) at 5700 meters. The team did not retrieve their ropes after their descent. BC was closed on June 22, and the team arrived home in Korea on June 29.

On the way out, they met three Czech climbers (see below) and showed them their climbing video from Amin Brakk. But the Korean team's English was too poor to explain detailed things.

KIM, WOO-SUN, *South Korea*

Amin Brakk, Czech Express. Based on the experience of previous groups, we arranged to arrive in the Amin Brakk area at the end of June. The unclimbed west face of Amin Brakk, situated in the Nangma Valley, was the object of our interest. Our climbing team was composed of three members: Filip Šilhan, Marek Holeček and David Štastný.

We arrived at Khande, the village that serves as the starting point for Base Camp, on June 22. We met the Koreans in the lower valley as they were descending from BC. We exchanged a couple of simple words. They looked like Napoleon's soldiers after the Battle of Waterloo. I asked them about their ascent; one of them answered that they hadn't been successful. We never saw the video showing the Korean attempt. I saw the camera (Sony DV1000 3CCD), but the Koreans were too tired to keep [up a] longer discussion. There were also communications problems.

With the help of five porters, we established our BC on June 26. At BC, we discovered a serious problem. We forgot our carabiners at home. We had just three single carabiners, three quickdraws, 80 bolts, 15 Friends with 'biners, two figure 8 rappel devices, three sets of stoppers and many slings. Fortunately, we found some 'biners hanging on our backpacks as well as on my photographic gear. Later, on the wall, we found more 'biners and many Friends.

Troubles with a locally purchased kerosene stove forced us to go back to Hushe in the main valley. The trip turned to be an excellent acclimatization. After getting geared up, we bivouacked beneath the wall on June 28, ready to make a serious attempt on the west face of Amin Brakk. At this time there was already one team of Spaniards who were attempting to climb the blank face at the far left. We were ready for a more obvious line on the wall, which was originally attempted by Spaniards in 1996 (see *AAJ* 1997, pp. 312-13, and *Desnivel* #114, 1996, pp. 53-58) and most recently by a South Korean team (see above).

On the first day of climbing we discovered that previous parties had left much fixed rope on this line. At that moment we didn't even dream that the ropes were fixed up to pitch 26. It was a bit disappointing to climb just a couple of centimeters away from fixed ropes, but there was no other way. We used the old ropes to descend and I used them twice for taking the photos. We never used the ropes for the ascent. From the base of the route to the very end, we climbed only under our own power. We used old bolts at the belays, which saved us a lot of time. There was no sense to place new bolts ten centimeters away from old ones.

On the second day, David dropped the bolt bag containing 70 bolts. He rappelled down on the glacier to look for them but found only seven. At that point, we had ten bolts and about 40 pitons.

The first third of the wall is a rotten slab with many features on it. It took us four days and 12 long pitches to get to an obvious ledge. Mostly vertical to slightly overhanging climbing started from this point. Deteriorating weather trapped us in the portaledges for two days. After one night's snowstorm, the wall turned to a big icefield, so we decided to descend back to BC. We used old fixed ropes (probably from the Spanish '96 attempt) for rappelling down as well as for jumaring back onto the ledge two days later when the weather improved. We nicknamed the ledge "Cracked Bucket Ledge," because of the leftovers of our predecessors. (The cracked bucket we found on the first bivy ledge was obviously too old to belong to the Korean climbers.)

The upper two thirds of the wall looked really challenging. The climbing was on solid gray, almost featureless granite. About half of the wall is dissected by huge overhangs. The distance between the ledge and the overhangs is about 300 meters and the wall is clearly divided by a continuous crack. The climbing demands a lot of jamming and liebacking with good possibilities for protection. We freeclimbed six long pitches, the hardest one rated IX-(5.12b). The seventh pitch above the Cracked Bucket Ledge is mostly overhanging and the most difficult technical pitch on the route. David started this pitch, but after placing a couple of pitons in a shallow crack, he fell and ripped out some of the gear, cutting his face. Marek finished this ugly overhanging section and graded it A4. (After our experience on the *El*



Marek Holeček on the west face of Amin Brakk.
FILIP SILHAN

Regalo de Mwoma route on the Central Tower of Paine [see page 272], we had to downrate the most difficult technical pitch on Amin Brakk to A3.)

Above the overhangs is a quite comfortable ledge, though not as good as the Cracked Bucket Ledge below. We found a broken A5 portaledge, so the name of this place was pretty clear. A tricky greasy crack that led from the ledge took us almost half a day to climb. It was the 20th pitch; we had spent nine days to this point on the wall. We climbed five more pitches that day, mostly crack climbing, until an evening snow storm stopped us. It snowed during the night and the next morning the weather looked about the same. In spite of that, we decided to go for the summit. We took just the necessary gear, with sleeping bags and food for two days, and jumared to our highest point. We found the blue haulbag full of gear [at 5700m], but we didn't use any of it.

The 26th pitch, climbed the day before, was the most difficult free climbing pitch on the route. Below the overhang, the thin crack gets greasy and

loose; it's overwhelming climbing at IX (5.12c) with just a little space and a little time for protecting. All the moves on this pitch were done free, but with rests. There was no time to try a redpoint attempt, but it would be possible. We did one more pitch and reached the high point of the South Koreans.

At this point it was already snowing hard and after two more pitches, the snowstorm became outrageous. The visibility lowered to eight or ten meters. We barely knew where to climb. A couple of meters of crawling in the snowy couloir took us to a rocky projection on the far south part of the west face. In the frozen snow, we dug a poor bivy site and spent one night—the longest one of all. It was snowing all the time but the next morning, the weather looked pretty stable.

It took us a short discussion to decide to continue. We started at about 5 a.m. With crampons on, we traversed a bit to the right and climbed up a long snowfield on the south side of the summit pyramid in 300 meters of mixed climbing. The gradient of the wall was up to 70 degrees. We didn't use a single ice screw on this section. We reached the top on July 12 at 1 p.m. just between two snowstorms. There was unpleasant electrical tension up on a snowy bulge, which is actually the summit. Because of a poorly functioning altimeter, we did not get an accurate height. The visibility was pretty low, but it was clear that this bulge is the true summit. From the rocky outcrop, which is about 20 meters beneath the top, we rappelled down to the saddle from where we had started our push for the top that day. It took four 50-

meter pitches to reach the traverse.

On the descent, there were a couple of tough moments (we left two 9mm ropes on pitch 29 because they got stuck), but at the end of the summit day we reached the camp at the broken portaledge. It was still snowing. The following day, the 13th of the climb, we rappelled down on the frozen fixed ropes. With the heavy pigs on the rope, it was more than an adventurous performance. During the descent, one of the Spanish climbers looked out of the portledge. It was Pep Masip. He was asking me something. I shouted "yes" to him, as I thought he was asking me if we had reached the top. Later on, I realized that he asked me if we were retreating as well. Anyway, we survived even this descent down the west face. Back on the ground, we named the route *Czech Express* (9 A3 70°).

FILIP ŠILHAN, *Czech Republic*

Amin Brakk, West Face, Sol Solet. Spaniards Sílvia Vidal, Miquel Puigdomènech and Pep Masip traveled to the Pakistan Karakoram, where, from July 8-August 8, they put up the route *Sol Solet* ("Sun, Little Sun") (VII 6c+ A5 60° ice, 1650m) on the west face of Amin Brakk (5850m). An account of their climb can be found earlier in this journal.

Changui Tower, East Face, Ludopatía. Fermín Izco, Mikel Zabalza and I left Pamplona on June 18 for Islamabad. Our objective was to climb in the Nangma Valley, which Fermín and Mikel got to know when they opened a new route on the Nameless Tower in 1995 (see AAJ 1996, p. 294).

We left Islamabad quickly on our way to Skardu in a van followed by a jeep to Kande, a village from which we started our two-day walk to Base Camp (4300m). We did some acclimatization and looked at walls. We decided on the east face of Changui Tower (5800m), rejecting the south face of Amin Brakk because of avalanche danger. Furthermore, we tried to find a route that would be predominantly free climbing rather than aid.

Our ascent began with numerous one-and-a-half-hour carries to the foot of the wall from BC. The next day, we fixed the first three pitches and went back to the tents. We returned to the wall with the intention of not descending until we had stepped foot on the summit.

We used two ledges, 300 meters of static line, a 10.5mm 60-meter rope, another 9mm 60-meter rope and a 6mm auxiliary cord that we used to haul the bag. We climbed capsule style.

After six days on the wall, a sudden change in the weather forced us to descend using all of the ropes that we had. We just made it to the start of our route. Three days later, we returned to the wall and had "laughs" to see who would be the first to jumar the 6mm cord. Luckily, it held.

Back on the climb, we found granite of exceptional quality, good weather and a multitude of cracks and dihedrals with many sections at grade 6. Marvelous. There was little work for the aiders and much less for

