

4800 meters and the day after reached 5100 meters, where we established Camp I. The south-east ridge of Ogre III (a.k.a. the west summit of Ogre II, 6960m) that we planned to climb was in reality not a ridge but a serious, major pillar interrupted by some huge ledges.

Camp I, in a very highly crevassed area, was in a relatively safe position. From CI we looked at the only safe line that we could climb and we took the obvious gully on the left. This, while relatively straightforward, was much longer than expected, and sometimes dangerous. The gully is about 900 meters long with sections of 80 to 85 degrees. We fixed it with our "wood ropes" all the way to the top. Three of us carried all the gear to CII (ca. 6100m), spent the night, and returned to BC.

Bad weather trapped us at BC for three days. Mauro Girardi and I, with Maurizio Giordani and Maurizio Venzo following us the next day, departed once more for CII. We planned to fix some ropes in the very avalanche-prone snow plateau and then bivouac high (or return to CII) and do an alpine-style attempt to the summit as a team of four. (Natale Villa had already had two very close calls in the lower part of the glacier and called his expedition off before reaching 6000 meters.)

The day of the first attempt of the peak, Mauro and I tried to overcome the higher part of the snow plateau to get to the rocky pillar. After four hours of struggling (to climb 85 meters), we rappelled to CII to rest. We found very inconsistent snow that proved to be almost insurmountable in such conditions.

At this point we had only seven days to go before leaving base camp. We waited for the two Mauriziros to join us and then decided to bring all gear down to base camp and look for easier targets. In the event, the weather deteriorated badly from then on, and even if we had wanted to, we wouldn't have had another chance to try for the summit.

The last five days, during bad weather, Mauro Giradri and I tried to open a new line on the Ogre Thumb. The first day we climbed three pitches and were stopped by snowfall. The second day we added two more, were again stopped by snowfall, and decided to clean the line.

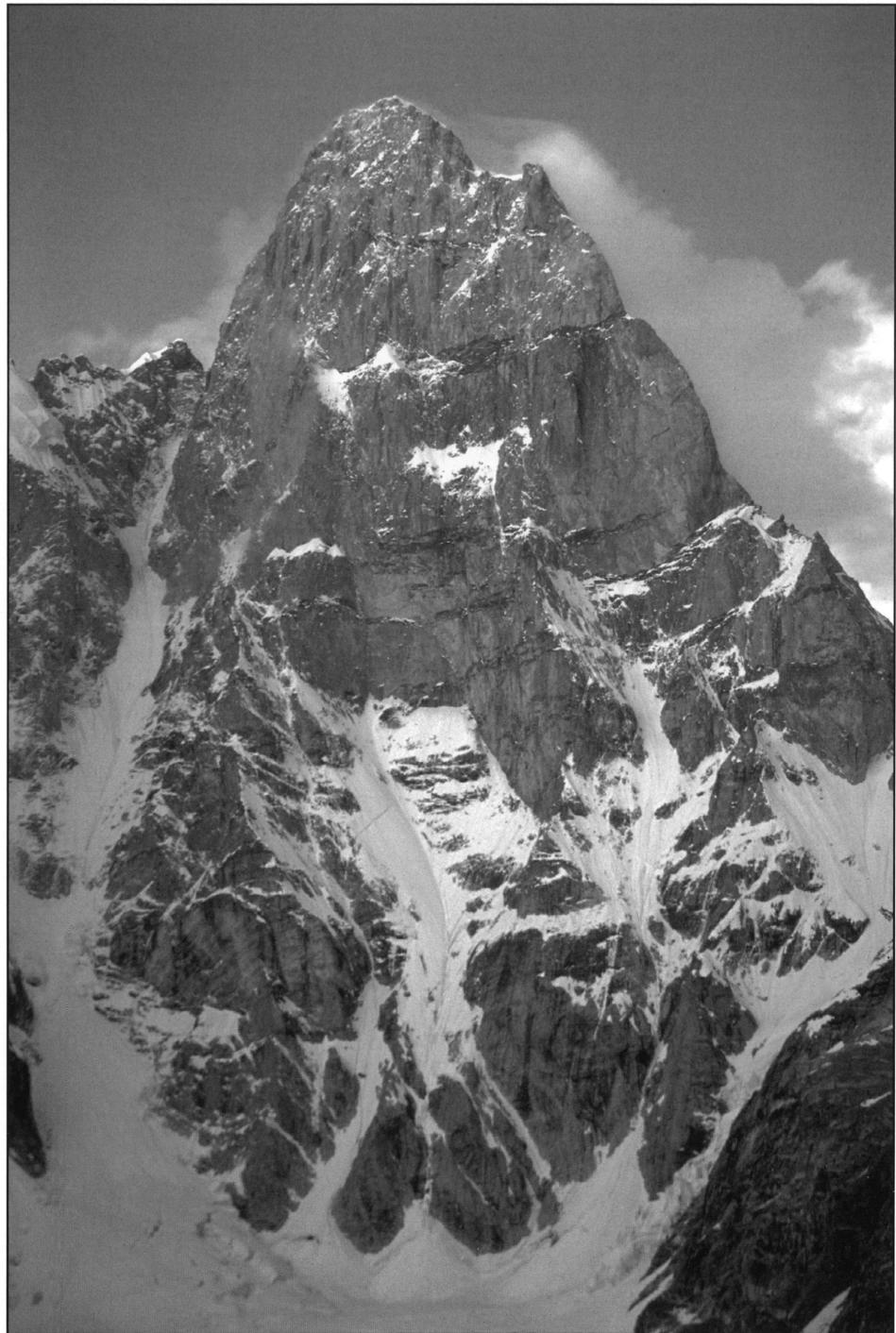
We cleaned all our fixed lines. We left nothing on the mountain, and brought down about 75 kilos of other parties' rubbish. (Some of this rubbish, including a snow shovel, is now on display at the Mountain Museum of Ragni di Lecco.) Considering that very few people have been there, we found the lower part of the glacier to be very dirty. We carried all our rubbish down to Skardu (not to Askoli, as usual) after having burned what we could.

EMANUELE PELLIZZARI, Italy

Latok III, Attempt. The members of the expedition were Alexander Odintsov (leader), Sergey Efimov, Alexander Rutchkin, Yuri Koshelenko, and Michail Bakin, the expedition doctor. Our Base Camp was established in a morainal pocket less than two hours from the wall on the shore of a lake fed by rivers. After an acclimatization ascent, we established ABC right under the wall. Later, this camp would suffer greatly from an air-blast as the result of an icefall from Latok's slopes.

By a three-to-one vote, we agreed on a route suggested by Rutchkin: a diretissima on the left side of the face. I reluctantly agreed, but hoped for the possibility of correcting the line during the ascent. This route necessitated a capsule-style ascent with a large amount of gear, aid climbing, and time (and a great likelihood of bad weather).

We tried to start our ascent each day for a week, but snowfall at night prohibited us. We spent one of these days digging out our haulbags. On July 19, during a brief pause in the bad weather, the four of us (Bakin remained in BC) began the route. Climbing ice/snow couloirs



Latok III's still-unclimbed west face. The Russian attempt took the central couloir to a point low in the prominent dihedral. YURI KOSHELENKO

took two days. From the bergschrund at 4900 meters to the beginning of vertical rock sections at 5600 meters, we climbed about 25 pitches; snow/sleet didn't hamper us. Avalanches scoured the bottoms of the couloirs.

On the third day, one look was enough to see that the inside corner of our intended route was dangerous due to rockfall. My suggestion to descend two pitches and outflank the dangerous section by ascending the left buttress received a cool welcome. The next day was characterized by heavy damage to our portaledges, a broken helmet, and a traumatized head. Nevertheless, the decision to continue the route prevailed. The next two days, which were full of snowfall and wet snow avalanches, changed nothing. On July 25, Rutchkin and I worked with fixed ropes. A rock knocked off by Rutchkin and Efimov hit both my hands where they were holding the jumars. Odintsov established the fracture of both my thumbs.

On July 26, leaving behind some gear for another attempt, my friends began to bring me down. For the first time in two weeks, it was really sunny.

The lower couloir was the most dangerous because of the speed of the avalanches, which had been rushing by like subway trains. In some places, the couloir was too close to the rocks and we had no choice but to descend. I had waited for the next pause and rushed across the couloir. The next avalanche started when I was one pitch below the belay station. I saw only Odintsov. He stayed in his place without moving. There then appeared a wet Rutchkin without his rucksack and Odintsov. They yelled that Efimov had been swept away by an avalanche. I saw that Efimov sat on an avalanche cone 300 meters below us. He seemed to be alive. The avalanche had torn Efimov and the rucksacks from the belay station. Rutchkin was almost suffocated by the snow and ice that packed beneath his helmet. As we found out later, Efimov came to after the shock, radioed Doctor Bakin in BC about the avalanche, and told him that the other members of the expedition were probably dead.

A rescue effort followed. Efimov had been lucky, surviving with one terribly broken leg. The injuries to his ribs, the other leg, and his forehead were trifles in comparison. After we put Efimov's legs in a cast, the mountain sent us a last greeting: a huge rock fell from the summit and slammed into the avalanche cone 20 meters away.

Doctor Bakin, Odintsov and Rutchkin spent several nights with Efimov on the glacier. There was a lot of work with the loads. I began to forget about my fingers. Alexander Rutchkin had three broken ribs and an injured neck. On July 30, a helicopter arrived and took Efimov and Doctor Bakin to Skardu.

YURI KOSHELENKO, *Russia*

Baltoro Muztagh

Shipton Spire, Akelarre, New Route. The expedition took place throughout July and August. After nine days, preparing in Rawalpindi and journeying to Skardu, Jose Ramón Ezquibel, Jokin Larrañaga and I arrived in Askole, met the porters and began the four-day trek to Shipton Spire base camp. Once we had finished carrying all the gear, we set up Advance Base Camp on the shoulder of the mountain, where we found platforms of the previous American expeditions to this big wall of the Karakoram. We soon became fascinated by the line that led up the pillar of the 1992 American attempt and where, two years later, Ryuchi Taniguchi had fallen more than 500 meters, leaving his two packs behind on the wall.

On July 10, we began to climb, fixing around 400 meters of rope up to a small ledge. We overcame some fine crack stretches without any extreme difficulty. From here we began the