

lumed into the Polish line and climbed two variation pitches from here to the top. After being on the wall for eight days, I re-ascended two previously fixed pitches and led three new pitches to the top. Since there was no protection for the last seven meters I climbed unroped to the summit horn. I had given my Trango boots to a porter who had lost his shoes after falling into a river, so I therefore had to climb the whole route in plastic boots. I climbed the last seven meters bare-footed. Sitting alone on top, gazing at Himalayan peaks, I felt very exposed. I rappelled the Polish route and traversed to my fixed line through the overhanging lower section. The 13-pitch route, which I named *Against the Grain*, has a grade of VI A4 V2.

Three days later I met up with my friends in the Charakusa valley and repeated *Nazar Brakk* (a.k.a. Luxor Pyramid) with Elise Kelly. This ominous peak towering above K7 base camp has some amazing 5.10 razor ridge climbing. The end of our trip involved some bouldering and new route scoping, then it was time to head to Thailand and enjoy some sunny sport climbing.

MATT MADDALONI, *Canada*

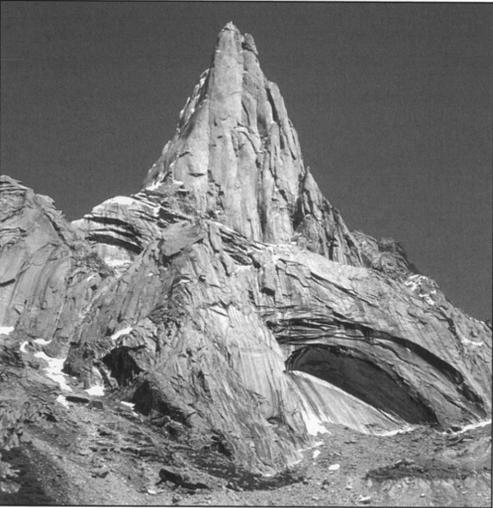
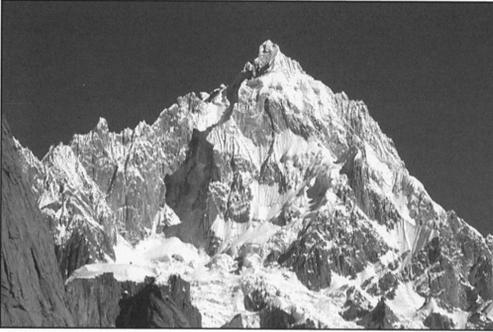
Drifika and Kapura, attempts. A six man Dutch team comprising Fedor Broekhoven, Coenradd Doeser, Wouter Dorigo, Bas Henzing, Martin Jongmans, and I were unsuccessful in our main objective, 6544m *Kapura*, south of the Charakusa Glacier. This beautiful unclimbed rock and ice pyramid lies immediately west of 7281m *K6* and had received no previous official attempt. We tried the west flank and northwest ridge, finding the climbing overall to be approximately Alpine AD with ice up to 60 degrees and one rock passage of IV/V. We were stopped at ca 5800m by very deep and unstable snow. However, we did manage to attempt other peaks in the area, achieving moderate success.

We tried nearby *Drifika* (6446m) by several lines. Two attempts were made to climb the long southeast ridge in its entirety but this proved too time-consuming. There was a rock overhang of IV/V and ice up to 65 degrees. At the beginning of the ridge we climbed a small top, which we christened *Pic Caro* (ca 5800m). We then tried to bypass much of the lower ridge by climbing a 600-meter couloir up the left side of the east face (TD: ice to 80 degrees and mixed Scottish II) to gain the upper southeast ridge at 6100m. However, once on the crest desperate snow conditions halted any further progress above 6200m. The Original Route up the north ridge was also attempted but again dangerous snow conditions forced a retreat.

Prior to our attempt on *Kapura* we managed to climb an unnamed 5800m top that stands just south of *Poro* (6295m). The ascent was made via the south face and southwest ridge (D: ice to 55 degrees and rock to IV+) and the peak christened *Minka*. We also repeated the 1988 British Route (*Bunnage/Hamilton*) on the north ridge of *Nazar Brakk* (ca 5300m), climbing the original aid section free at F6a using only natural gear. This route has now become quite popular and something of a classic of the Charakusa. It was also climbed by Canadian (see above) and Italian parties while we were in the valley.

BART HERSMUS, *Holland*

Link Sar and smaller granite towers in the Kondus Valley, attempts. In May-June Steve Larson, George Lowe, Joe Terravecchia, Andy Tuthill, Eric Winkelman, and I explored several possible first ascent routes on *Link Sar* (7041m) in the Kondus Valley. This valley was only re-opened to climbers in 2000, when another group of Americans climbed the *Tahir Tower* (see 2001 *AAJ*). In



Link Sar, above, and the "Dru," below. Steven Swenson

1979 a Japanese expedition made the first and only attempt on Link Sar during the period between 1974, when the Karakoram re-opened, and the mid 1980s, when the valley was closed again because of the Siachen conflict. Subsequent to its closure the Pakistan military constructed a road alongside the Saltoro and Kondus rivers and then finally several kilometers along the east side of the Kondus Glacier.

The team, barring myself who was delayed leaving the U.S. due to work commitments, established base camp during the third week in May next to the road and directly opposite the glacier below Link Sar. Larson, Lowe, Terravecchia, Tuthill, and Winkelman then followed the 1975 Japanese route across the Link Sar Glacier and up a gully on the left side of the main glacier draining the east flank of Link Sar. They continued along the left side of this glacier to a small basin below the southeast face, then moved left from the Japanese Route, which is exposed to considerable serac danger from above, to the base of a couloir. Although photographs in our possession appeared to show this might be free from serac danger, once they were able to see clearly into it,

they observed a serac wall partway up that threatened the entire route. They retreated to their camp in the basin and later that night a large avalanche came out of the couloir and blasted their tents. Deciding that the route was too dangerous, they descended to base camp.

I arrived at base camp late on June 10, two days after arriving in Islamabad, to find the rest of the team now attempting two rock towers further up the valley. These were ca 5200m and situated on the southeast side of the Kondus Glacier about 10 kilometers up valley from base camp. The higher tower to the left they called the Dru because of its close resemblance to the Chamonix peak, and the spire on the right they called the Candy Stripe, due to parallel snow-covered ramps near its summit.

From a camp at ca 4300 m George and Joe tackled the south ridge of the Dru while Steve, Eric and Andy attempted the south face of the Candy Stripe Spire. George and Joe began their route on the west side of the ridge but retreated after some very close calls with large falling rocks that chopped a rope. They made a second attempt that began earlier in the day to avoid rockfall. They climbed a total of eight or nine pitches (5.9 to 5.10+) before retreating due to very friable rock.

Steve, Eric, and Andy left early on June 10. After a brief ice bombardment in the gully to the left of the Candy Stripe, they escaped onto a terrace system and bivouacked at the base of

the difficulties. They planned to follow cracks and weaknesses up the center of the face, leading to a prominent peapod-shaped corner at about half height. Because the route looked highly featured and continuous, they limited themselves to free climbing gear, hoping for a rapid ascent.

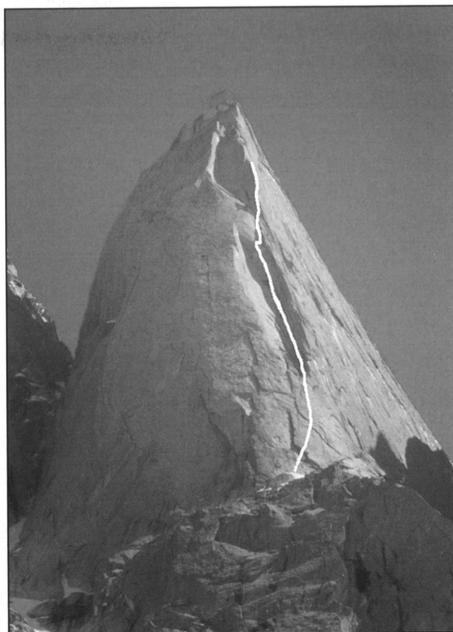
Next day Andy led the first block of five pitches, consisting of moderate cracks and ice encrusted chimneys (5.7-5.10). After a ca 12-meter leader fall he was able to move right to the base of the peapod corner. Here, Steve took over and due to the compact and seamless nature of the corner was forced to climb several difficult and run out pitches on the right hand wall (5.10-5.11). It became increasingly clear that they had underestimated the difficulties and the amount of gear required, so late in the afternoon they decided to rappel off, rather than spend the night in slings. Their high point was about two-thirds of the way up the wall from the start of the difficulties.

The five climbers returned and George and Joe left for home. I set out to reconnoiter a new line on Link Sar that I thought may be a safer route for a second attempt. I crossed the Link Sar glacier and climbed up a gully on the right side of the main glacier that drains the east side of Link Sar. This gully led to a large, beautiful, heather bench full of wild flowers. I followed it up left then back right to a possible campsite directly below the east face of Link Sar.

Andy, Eric, Steve, and I headed back up on June 19 for another attempt. The proposed route followed a complex set of ridges, ramps, and gullies that we hoped would avoid the serac danger that seemed to ring the upper part of the mountain. After camping at my previous high point, we climbed up to a col and then along a crest to the top of a rock tower, from where we could get a good view of the route. Unfortunately, we could now see that it was also exposed to serac fall, so we retreated.

After several days of bad weather we left base camp on June 24 to reconnoiter the north side of Link Sar. We headed up the Kaberi Glacier toward Chogolisa and camped on a spur of rock, noting that so far all the potential routes we had seen on the north face had been exposed to dangerous serac fall. On June 25 we climbed up through an icefall toward the pass that drops into the Charakusa Valley. The weather was not clear and we could only get brief glimpses of the face but from what we could see the ground above contained several large active ice cliffs that were funneling debris into a narrow chute near the bottom, where we would be forced to climb. We returned to base camp on the 26th and left for Skardu on the 27th.

This area is very accessible, being a one-day jeep ride from Skardu. With a short approach, it offers considerable savings in both time and money, since hiring porters is not necessary. There may be safer routes on Link Sar than the ones we explored. Arial photos might prove of great assistance but could be difficult to obtain given the peak's close proximity to the line of control in Kashmir.



Candy Stripe, showing the high point of the attempt.
Steven Swenson