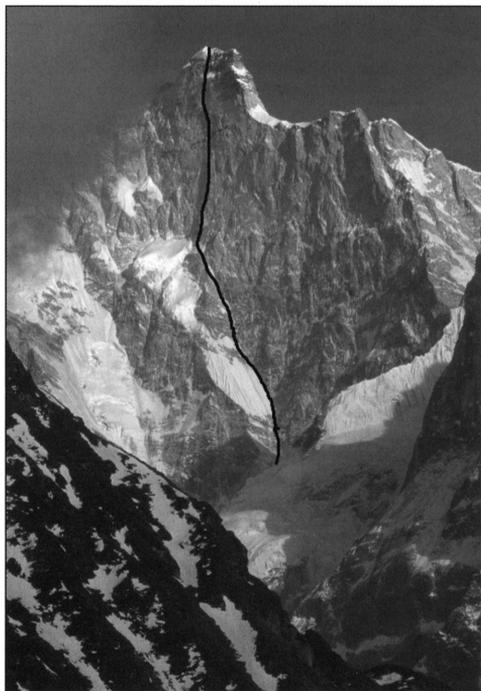


in the Tien Shan, the team arrived in Nepal in August, trekked to Jannu Base Camp, where they arrived on September 8, and then started work on the icefall. In this dangerous section to reach the glacier plateau at ca 5,600m below the wall, Mikhailov sustained fractured ribs, a hematoma in his lung and head injuries when he was hit by serac fall at 5,300m. He was evacuated to Kathmandu and then onward to a hospital in Bishkek.

Camp 2 was established at ca 6,000m and sometime toward the end of the month Odintsov suffered a cracked bone in his hand, forcing him down to the village of Ghunsa. Meanwhile, Samoilenko, the high-altitude cameraman, had returned to Kathmandu.

By October 4, and despite less than perfect weather or conditions, the remaining five climbers had pushed the route out to 7,000m on the face and dug a snow cave. They then managed to fix several more ropes up the quasi-vertical headwall above to ca 7,200m, higher than anyone before has reached on this part of the face. But it was not to be. Snowfall, which became heavy, drove them down to base camp. By October 12 there had been more than three days of constant snowfall, which was almost knee-deep above 5,000m and had completely buried the fixed ropes above. As winter descended on base camp, the threat of avalanche became too great to continue and the expedition was called off.



On May 26, 2004, the Russians completed their route on the north face of Jannu. There will be a feature on this climb in the AAJ 2005. *Lindsay Griffin*

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *High Mountain INFO*

Kangchenjunga, southwest face, partial new route/direct finish, La Luce del Nirvana. Of the five expeditions attempting 8,586m Kangchenjunga, two were successful with all summiters reaching the top on the same day. Four of these teams were attempting the Standard Route up the southwest face, while the fifth, a multi-national expedition led by Ralf Djumovits, including experienced high-altitude climbers such as Veikka Gustafsson and Michi Wärthl, was trying the north face-north ridge via the 1979 British Route. However, they failed to get above their Camp III at 7,200m, having fixed ropes on the difficult mixed face leading up to the col on the north ridge. Heavy snowfall in the region thwarted most climbers and those who succeeded had simply positioned themselves for a summit attempt at the right time.

Summiting on May 20 from a high camp at 7,600m were Italians Christian Kuntner, Mario Merelli, and Silvio Mondinelli with the Spaniard Carlos Pauner, all from a five-person expedition led by the 8,000m collector, Kuntner, and Kobi Reichen from a Swiss expedition.

This five-person group reached Camp 2 at 7,000m on May 17 and Camp 3 (7,600m) on the 18th. They had a rest day on the 19th before leaving early on the 20th to continue their climb up the glaciated slopes above to the start of the Gangway at ca 7,950m. Here, instead of following the Normal Route up the Gangway and then out right across a series of ramps to reach the west ridge above a large tower, they broke out right on new ground and climbed directly up the mixed rocky face to the summit. This gave between 450-500m of quite difficult climbing, starting with a 150m gully from 45-65°, a 20m rock wall of UIAA IV+, and then a horizontal traverse to the right to gain a deep couloir that splits the middle of the face. This was climbed for 200m (45-50°), above which they were forced to climb a difficult rock buttress on the right to reach easier ground. The buttress had a system of corners at III-IV, with one little section, thought possibly to warrant V, at an altitude above 8,400m. Another 100-150m of relatively straightforward mixed ground led to the top, which understandably was not reached until quite late in the day, at approximately 4:30 p.m. This is reported to be Mondinelli's 10th 8,000m peak and Kuntner's 12th. The new finish has been christened La Luce del Nirvana.

During the descent and as night fell, they separated. The Italians and Swiss were quicker on this difficult ground and although for much of the time they could see Pauner's headlight above them, they had lost contact in poor weather by the time they had regained Camp 3 (7,600m) at 1 a.m. on the 21st. No ropes had been fixed on the upper section of the climb and Mondinelli, having spent the winter in the Karakoram attempting Broad Peak, must have been very well-acclimatized. The three left lights outside the tent during the night and also went out on several occasions to shout for Pauner but at 9 a.m. on the 21st, with no sight of the Spanish mountaineer, they continued their descent, reaching base camp at 7 p.m.

Fortunately, late on the 22nd the feeble light from a headlamp was seen on the lower part of the face and two Sherpas were immediately dispatched. They found Pauner alive and able to walk unaided but badly frostbitten in the fingers. He was escorted safely to base camp that night. Unable to regain the tents at Camp 3 on the night of the 20th-21st, he had been forced to bivouac in the open after reaching the base of the Gangway at around 8,000m. The following day he had descended slowly, reportedly taking a 100m fall at one point and eventually bivouacking for a second time between 7,400m-7,500m. Back in Spain he was later to lose two fingers and toes.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *High Mountain INFO*

Maoist activity, an overview of the post-monsoon season. Maoist rebels fighting against Nepal's constitutional monarchy have been earning quite a lot of money by extorting funds from groups of climbers and trekkers. Not all groups have met this problem, but many have. The rates vary from one area to another, but the standard rate seems to be \$15-\$20 per foreigner. Expeditions going anywhere in Nepal, except in the Khumbu north of the Lukla airfield, must budget for these "donations" to the Maoist cause.

The Khumbu region above Lukla is totally free of Maoists. Very probably one important reason for this is the tireless efforts of Sir Edmund Hillary over four decades to make a better life for the people there, through his construction of numerous schools and health facilities, and the Lukla airfield, which gives easy access to trekking and climbing groups. He has also showed continuing support for those schools, hospitals, and health posts. Khumbu residents make up a community that is close-knit, relatively prosperous, and well educated, so for them the Maoist championing of the underdog has no appeal.