

same time. He noted that Rawu Lake and the entrance to the Lhagu Glacier were becoming tourist spots, and an entrance fee of 20Rmb is collected from foreigners at Lhagu village. Nakamura and his party also visited the neighboring Midoi and Mimei glaciers, noting that the local government is developing the Midoi Glacier for tourism (there was a group of Chinese tourists on the glacier) and that the north faces of Gemosongu (6,450m) and Hamogongga (6,260m) were most impressive. The Mimei Glacier was surveyed by the Chinese Academy of Science in the 1980s, but only porters rather than animals are available for load carrying. Three 6,000m peaks were seen in the distance, but they were not particularly attractive. This was part of a greater journey that included treks toward the glaciers north of the Yigong Tso and, farther east, toward the mountains north of Bomi via the village of Yur, all in the Eastern Nyanchen Tanglha.

HIMALAYA

Xixabangma, new variant to normal north side route. On October 3 Inaki Ochoa de Olza reached the main summit of Xixabangma (8,012m) having made what is believed to be a new variant on the north face. The Spanish climber followed the normal route to Camp 3 (7,440m), the point where it climbs onto the final ridge leading up to the central summit (7,999m, Chinese map). From there he moved down and east, descending 150m before continuing his leftward traverse. He crossed a bergschrund and climbed to a rocky buttress, which he passed on the left flank via a step of UIAA III. He then continued up the northeast face (60°) to hit the southeast ridge at 7,950m, more or less at the same point where the 1982 British route emerges from the southwest face. From here it is a short distance back right to the summit.

Ochoa de Olza left Camp 1 (6,400m) at 1 a.m. and reached the main summit at 2 p.m. He has christened his 800m variant Lorpen-Diario de Navarra. Some years ago a Russian team left the standard route and climbed out onto the face below the summit, but this was rather higher and a completely different line. This new line avoids some of the problems that often occur with avalanche-prone snow high on the mountain, either in following the Chinese traverse or the sharp connecting ridge from the central to main summits.

Ochoa de Olza's solo ascent was the first to the main summit of the season, despite almost 100 climbers working on the mountain from the north. It is his 11th 8,000m peak and his fourth attempt to climb to the highest point of Xixabangma. He reached the central summit in 1995.

LINDSAY GRIFFIN, *Mountain INFO*, *CLIMB Magazine*

Palung Ri, south face. During my days spent acclimatizing for an ascent of Cho Oyu, I noticed a good line on the neighboring peak of Palung Ri (7,100m). I was working in this area as a guide, but bad conditions above 7,000m had confined us to base camp. The south face of Palung Ri is composed of steep snow and ice, interspersed with rock bands. It is not too difficult and offers good climbing in couloirs and mixed terrain. Higher up, the face becomes more open and leads to the summit ridge, where I found dangerous wind-blown snow and scary cornices.

I left base camp on the morning of September 19 and walked along the moraine to the bottom of the south face. I began climbing on rock and mixed terrain, with difficulties up to 4 and M4, and then continued up nice gullies with short steps of steep ice (80-90°). Difficulties were not sustained, just 10m of steep ground here and there in the long narrow couloir. Above this section the climb finished on snow and ice (50-60°) and became easier



The south face of Palung Ri showing Jan. After his ascent, the Spanish climber descended the west ridge (left skyline). *Jordi Tozas*

as I reached the summit ridge. I decided to descend the west ridge, as this led me closer to base camp, and the glacier at its base is not as crevassed as the one below the Palung La. I took only crampons, ice axes, energy food, and drink. I climbed alone and without a rope, completing the climb to the summit in a round trip of eight hours from base camp. I named the 900m route Jan. Although I had climbed solo in this style before, I had never done so in the Himalaya; it was a great experience.

JORDI TOZAS, *Spain*

Cho Oyu, shooting of Tibetan refugees. When shots rang out near Cho Oyu's crowded advance base camp on September 30, climbers ventured out to see what was going on. A professional photographer from Romania, Sergiu Matei, took his camera and was in time to film a queue of Tibetans snaking up the trail to the Nangpa La, the high pass into Nepal used every year by hundreds of Tibetans fleeing their homeland to join the Dalai Lama in India. His pictures show a line of unarmed Tibetans trudging uphill. Then a shot is heard, and a figure falls to the ground. Behind them can be seen Chinese border police, who had fired at their retreating backs. The figure was a 17-year-old nun, Kelsang Namtso, who had put up no resistance and died where she lay in the snow.

The first official Chinese account said the Tibetans had attacked the armed police, who were then forced to defend themselves. Later, her death was officially attributed to altitude sickness. A Czech expedition leader, Josef Simunek, who witnessed the shooting, told a pro-Tibetan organization based in Washington, "We felt as though it was 20 years ago during communist times in our country, when Czech soldiers killed Czech citizens in their escape over the Iron Curtain."

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, *AAC Honorary Member, Nepal*

Cho Oyu, southwest face to west ridge, partial new route. On October 2 the accomplished Slovenian mountaineer Pavle Kozjek soloed a partial new route to the summit of 8,188m Cho Oyu. Starting from an advanced base at 6,200m on the Gyabrag Lho Glacier, Kozjek soloed a new line on the southwest face, left of the existing Japanese and Swiss-Polish routes. Most of the 1,100m face gave snow and ice climbing at 50-60° but at ca 7,200m, near the exit, his way was barred by a steep ice fall, which the Slovenian avoided by climbing rock to the right (UIAA V-). At ca 7,300m he joined the 1986 Polish Route, up which he continued for the remaining 900m to the top, completing his ascent in a single push of 14.5 hours. After reaching the summit at 6 p.m., he descended to Camp 2 at 7,000m on the normal route. Next day he continued down