



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



The summit of Cho Oyu (8,188m) on February 1977, as photographed from Emil Wick's Pilatus Porter. (1) West ridge complete (international team led by Krzysztof Wielicki, 1993; original west ridge by Poles, 1986). (2) Southwest face, Slovenian Route (Kozjek, solo, 2006). (3) Southwest face, Japanese Route (Yamanoi, solo, 1994). (4) Southwest face, Swiss-Polish Route (Kurtyka-Loretan-Troillet, 1990). *Jacques Belge*

to base camp, reaching it after a total of 30 hours. Kozjek's ascent marks the first time that a new route on an 8,000m peak has been soloed in a single push and in a day. His account of this climb, for which he won the People's Choice at this year's Piolet d'Or, appears earlier in the *Journal*

*Hungchi, north face.* A five-member party led by Toshiya Nakajima made the first ascent of Hungchi (7,038m) from the north in the autumn. The summit was reached by Naoyuki Momose and the leader on November 1. Hungchi, a border peak a little west of Everest, was first climbed in 2003 by a Japanese expedition from the Nepalese side. The same year another Japanese expedition

attempted the mountain from the north, making a long approach from Everest base camp up the Central and Western Rongbuk glaciers. The team climbed the north face to a 6,600m col on the northwest ridge and then continued up the crest, partly on the Nepalese flank, before retreating 200m below the summit (see *AAJ 2004*, p. 426). It is not clear whether the 2006 ascensionists followed this route.

TAMOTSU NAKAMURA, *Editor, Japanese Alpine News*

*Everest statistics and records in the spring season.* The number of teams on Everest during the spring was 94. These ranged in size from one member with no Sherpa helpers to 29 members and 22 Sherpas. Perhaps surprisingly, the number of expeditions was five fewer than the 2005 total of 99, but it was actually larger on the Tibetan side during the spring of 2006, up from 57 to 64. On the Nepalese side there was a big drop, down from 42 to 30.

In terms of number of summiters, there was an even greater difference between the Tibetan and Nepalese sides. A total of 276 people went to the top from Tibet, not counting the possibility that David Sharp summited and died during his descent; his movements above 8,500m are not known. From Nepal only 192 people succeeded.

One explanation for the fall in numbers summiting from the Nepalese side was the worrisome situation created by the 10-year-old armed rebellion of the Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) and its increasing use of force throughout the country. In addition, this spring's political unrest spilled onto the streets of Kathmandu and other towns nationwide, organized by conventional parties angered by the King's "autocratic" actions. It took the form of protest marches, public rallies, and general strikes, including bans on motorized travel. The international news media gave increasing attention to all this, and some expeditions canceled their plans to visit Nepal.