

VARIOUS NOTES

Bagrot Valley, where they first felt they might find a route but where avalanche danger soon made them abandon all hopes of climbing Rakaposhi. The climbers followed the scientists to the Baltar Glacier in the Tota-Uns Valley, which branches off from the Hunza Valley at Chalt. Between this valley and the Batura Glacier rise unnamed 23,000-foot peaks which the climbers compared to the Chamonix Aiguilles. They had already established their second high camp at over 20,000 feet on one of these formidable peaks and on June 24th were about to make a try for the summit when severe storms forced them back to their base. Later in the summer, they reconnoitered but failed to climb 25,886-foot Dasto Ghil. On August 5th, Martin Schliessler and Adolph Mayer climbed a 25,250-foot unnamed mountain in the Batura Group. Unfortunately, Dr. Karl Heckler was drowned in a river crossing.

The Cambridge University Mountaineering Club expedition attempted Rakaposhi in July and August. They reached over 20,000 feet before being turned back off the southwest ridge by bad weather.

Karakoram. The German expedition headed by Dr. Karl Herrlichkoffer and including many of the previous year's Nanga Parbat group, which left Munich on July 29th to try Hidden Peak, returned without achieving notable results.

K2. A very strong Italian expedition under the leadership of Professor Ardito Desio and consisting of 12 climbers, 7 of them guides, and 4 scientists arrived in late May at their base camp at the foot of K2 (28,253 ft.). Bad weather hindered their operations during the first weeks of June and on June 21st they had the crushing misfortune of losing Mario Puchoz to pneumonia at Camp 2 (19,000 ft.). When the weather improved, they pushed their camps up the Abruzzi ridge along the route and in roughly the same positions as the Americans. On July 19th, Achille Compagnoni, Walter Bonatti, Ubaldo Rey, and Lino Lacedelli, with Hunza porters, established Camp 7 at 25,000 feet. They fixed about 2500 feet of nylon rope on the upper portions of the ridge. Stormy weather plagued them while they tried to supply the high camps. On July 29th four Italians left Camp 7 with the final heavy loads. Although two of the group had to return, the other

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two continued to Camp 8 (25,750 feet) and found that the reconnaissance party had found a site for Camp 9 at 26,750 feet at the top of the ice ridge. This bivouac camp lay just below what the Italians found the most difficult section of the climb, an ice couloir that cut through a 650-foot band of rock and ended at the base of the summit ridge. The oxygen equipment, which was intended only for the summit pair, had been abandoned the day before half way to Camp 8. On the 30th two of the climbers descended to retrieve the oxygen while Compagnoni and Lacedelli established the bivouac. Another Italian with two Hunzas packed to Camp 8 from Camp 7. Late in the afternoon two Italians and a Hunza started from Camp 9 with the oxygen equipment. One climber had to return, but the other continued with the Hunza until night overtook them and they had to bivouac at about 26,500 feet—luckily with no ill consequences.

On the morning of July 31st Compagnoni and Lacedelli saw the pair below them and descended to get the oxygen before starting their climb to the summit. Using oxygen for the first time, they attacked the left side of the couloir in deep powder snow. For hours they worked their way up the couloir and then up the snow to the base of the final ice dome, which was defended by a big schrund. Although late in the day, they were struggling up the final ridge, often in snow to their hips, when they realized that their oxygen had given out. Still 500 feet from the top and with the summit looking very close, they continued on without removing the apparatus. Finally at 6:00 P.M. they reached the highest point, a short snow ridge oriented north-south. After raising two Italian flags and a Pakistani flag on their ice-axes and taking photographs, they turned at dusk to descend. With great difficulty and thoroughly exhausted, they groped their way in the dark down to the couloir. Suddenly one of them noticed that he was being dragged along by a snow-slab avalanche. After striking two or three times, he came to rest unhurt where he awaited his companion. While they were crossing a large crevasse, one lost his ice-axe into it. Below this, while rappelling down a 100-foot ice cliff, the first man felt the rope give way and he fell, again unhurt, into the soft snow at the base of the cliff. His companion climbed down by a roundabout

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route. Finally, at 11:00 P.M., the victorious pair staggered in to their friends at Camp 8. The next morning the descent continued in gathering bad weather. While still on the snow shoulder, one climber slipped and fell 650 feet before luckily striking a patch of soft snow which prevented his plunge down the eastern side of the ridge to the Godwin Austin Glacier. The fixed ropes helped the party down to Camp 4, where they spent the night and then reached the base camp the next day, August 2nd. Professor Desio has stated that, had the climb been delayed a single day, the weather would have made success absolutely impossible. To emphasize the team-like character of the climb, he withheld the names of the summit pair until the fête given the climbers in Genoa on October 12th. Our member, Dr. Charles Houston, leader of the 1938 and 1953 American Alpine Club Expeditions to K2, was a guest of the Italians at the celebrations.

OTHER PARTS OF ASIA

U.S.S.R. A Soviet press dispatch quoted in "Die Alpen" gives a review of mountaineering in 1953 in the U.S.S.R. The sport seems to have become very popular; they claim to have 17,000 mountain climbers, many of whom participated in climbs from the 26 climbing camps in the Caucasus and the Pamirs and made mass ascents of Elbrus, Kazbek, and other peaks, on which fifty to a hundred people reached the summits. They also mention ascents of the volcanos of Kamchatka and of 20,000-foot peaks in the Pamirs but give no names. They claim one thousand climbs in the Tien Shan, including first ascents of the "Peak of the Centenary of the (Russian) Geographical Society" (21,000 feet), Mt. Grebechok (20,350 feet), and Peak Baiankol (19,030 feet). In the Altai they climbed the highest summit, Belukha (15,157 feet). They also state that they climbed 23,311-foot Peak Korgenevski. Another dispatch says that on August 17, 1954, they climbed Pik Revoljuzii (23,096 feet), one of the mountains above the Fed-schenko Glacier, which was reconnoitered by a Russo-German expedition in 1938 and called "Dreisplitz" by them. The Russians state that there is absolutely no truth in the story reported tentatively in the 1954 *American Alpine Journal* about a Russian at-