

ASIA

Tibet

Mount Everest from the North. The Chinese propaganda magazine, *China Reconstructs*, of August, 1960 states that on May 25 the Chinese Wang Fu-chou and Chu Yin-hua and the Tibetan Gonpa reached the summit of "Mount Jolmo Lungma, the world's highest peak." An expedition of 214 Chinese and Tibetans was led by Shih Chan-chun with deputy leader Hsu Ching. It was a relatively inexperienced group; none of them had climbed for more than five years and the experience of the summit trio actually totaled less than five years. An advance party was on the mountain a month ahead of the rest and established Base Camp at 16,800 feet, Camp I at 17,700 feet, Camp II at 19,350 feet and Camp III at 21,000 feet. The climbing party arrived at Rongbuk Monastery on March 19 and advanced up the East Rongbuk Glacier as far as Camp III by March 27. While the main group descended towards Base Camp the next day, Hsu Ching led a party up the 60° to 70° (sic) slopes of the North Col and up a final "narrow ice chimney with a gradient of 70°." The North Col slope was prepared and climbers left Camp III on April 25 to climb as high as 26,000 feet for a final acclimatization. On April 29, they left Camp IV at 23,000 feet and kept on despite a storm the next day to establish Camp V at 25,000 feet on May 1. On May 2 Shi Chan-chun and Hsu Ching with the Tibetans Lhagpatsering and Migmar in ten hours climbed to 26,500 feet. The Tibetans descended to Camp V for food during the night and returned at dawn with Wang Feng-tung, Shi Ching and Gonpa. Their account of the next section is interesting: "At dawn, five of us set out again. We rounded the 'First Step' and climbed a steep rock slope called the 'Yellow Ribbon.' At 8500 metres (27,888 feet) we set up the assault camp (Camp VII). Then with Wang Feng-tung I decided to explore the route to the summit. Before long we came to the famous 'Second Step'—a 30-metre-high rock face which British mountaineers had found insurmountable. We started to climb it and by nine o'clock at night had got to within three metres of the top. We peered at each other in the darkness. It was too dangerous to go on or back. We had neither tent nor sleeping bags and the temperature was about 40° C. below zero. After some search we found a shelf in the snow along the rocky wall, and dug a hole with our ice axes. It was barely large enough to hold us both. We sat in one another's laps, trying to keep warm. There was not much oxygen left in our cylinders, so we decided to turn it off. Next morning as the bright rays of the sun lit up Jolmo Lungma, we emerged from our hole, having made world mountaineering history by

spending a whole night at 8600 metres without artificial oxygen." The whole party was back at Base Camp again by May 13.

Following the supply train, which set out on May 15, the summit party and support team left Base Camp on May 17. On May 23 they reached Camp VII at 27,900 feet. At 9:30 the next morning the summit trio, accompanied also by Liu Lien-man, left camp with 22-pound packs, which included the oxygen gear and ice axes. The Second Step caused them great trouble and took them five hours. Its last ten feet were particularly difficult. Liu Lien-man fell four times as he tried to lead it. Chu Yin-hua even attempted it in bare feet to get better purchase but failed too. He finally made it after three hours of attempts with a *courte échelle*. These efforts had so exhausted Liu Lien-man that slightly higher, already at seven P.M., he found that he could go no farther. In an "open Communist Party meeting" they decided to leave him behind and to continue into the night. At 28,700 feet they had knee-deep snow to wade through. At 28,970 feet, just as their oxygen ran out, they reached the bottom of a cliff. Gonpa led them to the top, which they reached in the dark at 4:20 A.M. They stayed for fifteen minutes on the summit, leaving a Chinese flag and a bust of Mao on the rocks on the northwest side. At dawn they joined their companion who had saved them a little of his oxygen. It is regretted that they published no pictures taken on the upper slopes of the mountain. It must also be emphasized that the account given here is taken entirely from Chinese sources. The details are such that mountaineers in nearly all parts of the climbing world have received the news with considerable skepticism.

Nepal

Indian Expedition to Mount Everest. The principal of the Himalayan Mountaineering Institute, Brigadier Gyan Singh, led an expedition of 13 climbing and 7 non-climbing members to Mount Everest. On May 9 Ang Temba and A. B. Jungalwala established Camp VI on the South Col. Bad weather conditions prevented any attempt higher until May 22. On May 25 Nawang Gombu, Sonam Gyatsho and Narindar Kumar reached a height of 28,300 feet before bad weather forced them to retire. A second party was ready to try to climb to the summit but the oncoming of the monsoon forced the decision to abandon the attack on May 26.

Annapurna II. An expedition organized by the Services of Great Britain, Nepal and India and led by Lieutenant Colonel J. O. M. Roberts made the first ascent of Peak 26,041 feet in the central Nepal Himalaya, commonly known as Annapurna II, in the spring of 1960. The summit was