

to our climbing experience. We would make it down alive and with a margin of safety. It was all in a day's climb, and what an enjoyable climb! We were in our element.

JOHN HARLIN

New Routes on the Aiguille du Plan and the Cardinal, Rassemblement International d'Alpinistes, Chamonix. Memories of Chamonix: vin rouge, bad weather, talking politics, great meals But what of climbing? We had come, forty of us from twenty countries, communist and capitalist alike, to participate in the International Alpine Assembly at France's *Ecole Nationale de Ski et d'Alpinisme* hopefully for three full weeks of climbing in the Mont Blanc massif. But the weather (according to school director Jean Franco, "the worst July we've seen in seven years") decided otherwise. Nonetheless, climb we did and the British and American delegates managed to make the only first ascents of the *stage*. Staggering under incredible loads of food (steaks were *de rigueur* for all hut meals), Steve Miller (USA), Chris Bonington (England), Tom Patey (Scotland) and I made our way to the Charpoua Hut to attempt the unclimbed west face of the Cardinal, a sort of miniature Dru crouching in the shadow of the Aiguille Verte. Eleven hours, fifteen pegs, many grooves, much grunting and a couple of tension traverses later, we were wandering about at the top of the 1350-foot face, looking for the summit in a snowstorm. (Miller has given more details of the route. They climbed broken rock to an ice gully. At a narrow point in the gully they ascended onto a ridge on the right and up past the base of a pinnacle. Icy chimneys gave access to the corner where the west and south faces meet. From there they were on easier ground to the summit. — *Editor.*) (400 meters, Grade IV, F8.) The descent down a rotten-snow couloir on the Couvercle side left us soaked to the skin and even my falling into a bergschrund after dark did not seem as funny as it should have. But a truly *cordons bleu* dinner in the steaming darkness of the hut dried out our spirits. Feeling very pleased with ourselves indeed, we went down the next morning to Chamonix, its cold, dripping streets and warm *bistros*. Driven out of Chamonix by a week of rain, Chris and I stowed our gear in Lionel Terray's station wagon and with a couple of hot-shot Belgian climbers drove to the sunnier clime of the Vercors range near Grenoble. Here we did penance for all our carousing by sweating our way up a couple of fine classic routes in a sultry summer heat, but this was not enough. . . . So with Terray at the wheel (driving like Juan Fangio) and time running out, we sped back through the night to Chamonix, hatching a

grand plot for our final coup: the west face of the Aiguille du Plan. Not exactly a virgin face, the *voie* Roch-Gréloz and the slightly more direct Brown-Patey already went up this side of the Plan, but the fact that they avoided the buttress-like cliff band that forms the upper two-thirds of the face aroused our slumbering *direttissima*-mania and we were off . . . Our first attack fizzled in threatening weather, but after a reassuring phone call to the Geneva weather bureau, Chris Bonington and I were back under the face the next day, trudging up long snowfields where Chris dropped his hard hat, which merrily bounced out of sight. On the lower face we followed a long straight spur with much laybacking, a few pins and more and more snow and ice the higher we got. At noon, after climbing some 1350 feet of rock, we ran into the upper pillar or buttress, which presented only one (ugh!) weakness: a great, north-facing dihedral, plastered with ice and stretching some 650 feet up and out of sight. Chris took over the lead, and what followed was the most amazing demonstration of mixed climbing I have ever seen. A very hard afternoon's work, clearing ice off every hold and using quite a few aid pins, including two rurs to bypass an overhanging jam, got us seven pitches up the dihedral with the end nowhere in sight and our morale fairly shattered after several sling belays and no sign of a bivouac ledge. But more afraid of the rappels below than of a night standing up, we kept on and found a wee ice-covered ledge just after dark. Here we chopped out two seats and settled down to a sleepless night, watching the stars wink out one by one as great cloud masses rolled in from the west . . . *Pourvu que ça dure!* But it did, and in the morning three more aid pins got us up the last hard pitch of the dihedral and back to moderate mixed climbing. Minutes later we were cramponing up the summit névé as the first snowflakes floated down. (700 meters, Grade V, F9, A3.) Before we knew what was happening, it was all over, the Midi-Plan traverse in reverse, the téléférique back to Chamonix, getting out our coats and ties for the last reception at the *Ecole*, overflowing glasses of champagne, toasts, farewells, thank-yous, embracing our friends: Mexicans, Swedes, Russians, Austrians, our incredible hosts the French — three weeks of the finest mountain fellowship we had ever known.

RAFAEL TEJADA-FLORES

Petit Dru. George Lowe, of Salt Lake City, made the first American ascent of the Bonatti Pillar of the Petit Dru in the summer of 1965 with the Englishman Chris Jones.