

*Annapurna South Face*, by Chris Bonington. New York: McGraw-Hill, 1971, 334 pages, 60 color plates, \$10.00

This climb represents the most difficult route yet accomplished on an 8000-meter peak. However, when we are told that it is a landmark in the history of mountaineering as important as that of the first ascent of Everest, we must realize that it will not be up to this generation to categorize their own ascents. It is much more likely that the landmarks will prove to be ascents such as that by Buhl and Diemberger on Broad Peak. In other words, a sport that insists its very existence depends on men adapting to the harsh mountain environment should aim in the direction of small, self-contained parties rather than the huge expedition sieges of the past.

Contrary to the style of most British expeditionary accounts, we are actually on the mountain by page 75. The writing is not brilliant—one British reviewer called it “service prose”—but it is lucid and uncluttered, easy to follow. The idea of including actual radio conversations and quotes from other climbers’ diaries adds another dimension. When we consider that Bonington wrote the book in just a couple of months after returning from the expedition, it appears quite remarkable. The sixty adequately reproduced color plates rate with the best photos from high Himalayan climbs. The ninety-page appendix is not something that every reader will wish to completely devour. But for those planning expeditions, for those with a special interest in equipment, oxygen, food, communications, photography, mountain medicine or the Nepalese, this section provides factual information that would not be assimilated into a normal expedition text.

In a book that was rushed it is perhaps inevitable that small errors will occur, but it is still disturbing to detect three misspelled proper names in a two-page spread. Regardless of the minor errors, this book is one of the most important, most readable and most lavishly reproduced expedition accounts of recent years.

GALEN A. ROWELL

*Summits and Secrets*, by Kurt Diemberger. Translated from the German by Hugh Merrick. London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd, 1971. 344 pages, 78 photographs, 8 maps and sketches. £5.50 (about \$15)

There cannot be many mountaineering autobiographies better than this one, combining vivid descriptions of great adventure with some tragedy and much gentle humor, spiced with thoughtful reflections on the meaning of one lifetime devoted to climbing. It is perhaps a premature autobiography, since by my reckoning Diemberger could have been only thirty-eight years of age by the time it was published. One may hope for a second volume twenty years hence.

Kurt Diemberger’s accomplishments include first ascents of two of

the world's fourteen 8000 meter peaks: in 1958, Broad Peak, with Herman Buhl; in 1960, Dhaulagiri, with several other Austrians. In the Hindu Kush he climbed two of the several summits of Tirich Mir, the highest mountain (25,290 feet) in that range. In the Alps, beginning as a boy, he seems to have done virtually everything of note, including the north faces of the Eiger and the Matterhorn, the Walker Spur on the Grandes Jorasses, and a unique *direttissima* on the Königswand (in the Ortles group, about halfway between Milan and Innsbruck; Diemberger refers to this as "the hardest of my first ascents").

More impressive than any list of names and heights is Diemberger's style of climbing. He himself does not make much of this (and there is not a word about climbing ethics), so it is only gradually that the Diemberger style becomes manifest. He prefers small and simple expeditions. The Dhaulagiri climb was an exception. But this and all his high Asian climbs seem to have been done without oxygen. Some of his high climbs were accomplished in parties of two! And in the Hindu Kush he used no high altitude porters.

Diemberger seems to have more pure love of the mountains for their own aesthetic values, and for the joy of being with good companions, than for the notoriety and honor of doing first ascents. This has led him to attempt improbable explorations and traverses—just for the sheer joy of it. In describing the Hindu Kush adventures, he devotes more space to the fun of a long drive, Europe to Asia, in an old car, and to the magnificent landforms to be seen in making a complete circuit of the Tirich Mir massif, than to the climbs. Again, in Greenland, where on a sudden impulse he led his party on a traverse of the Qioqe Peninsula, we are given appreciations of glaciers, fjords, and ice cliffs, not route descriptions. Everywhere, beginning with hunts for crystals and fossils as a boy in the Austrian Alps, Diemberger is concerned with form and shape and substance in the way that a classic, true mountaineer is concerned: more a lover than a conqueror. Such route descriptions as he does give are often frustratingly impressionistic.

"Artful" can be used to describe Diemberger's writing; it is just that, rising at times to lyricism (here we must nod to the art of the translator, too). Like most art, Diemberger's sometimes fails to communicate. He uses words as some painters use brush and pallet, dabbing here and there to create an impression of a thing, a mood, a transient thought, without regard for orderly sequence. Some readers may find his penchant for incomplete sentences, abrupt changes of mood, and narrative discontinuity maddening; I did—at first. The overall effect is a good one.

One chapter, the account of Diemberger's ascent of the North Face of the Eiger, is alone worth the price of the book. But so is the story of a series of *eight* thunderstorms on the Aiguille Noire, on Mont Blanc: 30 hours of lightning, three of the party struck and burned, desperate bivouacs in snow and ice. And so too the chapters on Asia. Anyone

who has toured or climbed in the Alps will certainly find the book rewarding. Finally, the many photographs are excellent but the captions are inadequate.

GRANT BARNES

*La Montagne des Autres—Alpinisme en Pays Kurde*, by Bernard Amy. Paris: Arthaud, 1972. 239 pages, 26 photos, 4 maps.

In southeastern Turkey, close to the frontiers with Syria, Iraq and Iran, lies a fascinating range, the Cilo Dag, which rises to some 13,000 feet. These comparatively little explored mountains are interesting in themselves, but much of their attraction comes from their remoteness from all but the proud and independent inhabitants of the region, the Kurds.

The well known French climber, Bernard Amy, and some friends visited Kurdistan in August of 1969 and made some remarkable ascents. They soon found that in the Cilo Dag "one can not live except with the Kurds. The climber is assured not only of discovering new mountains but of doing it side by side during his whole stay with the tribes of the region." Consequently Amy has given us not only the story of difficult ascents in a remote area, but also a detailed highly interesting account of the Kurds. Appendices on the light expedition, of climbing in the Cilo Dag and an extensive bibliography complete the volume. Four maps give important details. There are 26 excellent photographs both of the peaks and of the Kurds. I hope that American climbers will soon turn to this region which has been sadly neglected by them. In making their plans, they will have to lean heavily on *La Montagne des Autres*.

H. ADAMS CARTER

*Deborah: A Wilderness Narrative*, by David Roberts. New York: The Vanguard Press, 1970. 188 pages, 15 photographs, \$6.95

Who has not had at least one mountain experience ruined by some kind of intrapersonal conflict? Planning may be flawless, weather perfect, rock and snow solid, yet given one abrasive personality—or two otherwise nice guys who just can't get along—a brilliant climb may fail as a total experience. Leaders of major expeditions, knowing this to be true, consciously survey character as well as conditioning and technical abilities in choosing companions.

But the young, the novice and even the grizzled veteran if it is a short trip—are not so discriminating. Which brings us to *Deborah*, a story about two college chums who grate on each other's nerves in the best of circumstances, yet set off for a two-month attempt on the unclimbed east ridge of Deborah, in the Hayes Range, 100 miles south of Fairbanks. A third of the book is taken up with a history of the ambivalent relation-