

India—Jammu and Kashmir

Arjuna, Kishtwar Himal. A 7-man Polish expedition led by Bogumił Słana finally made the first ascent of Arjuna, which has been attempted various times in the last years. The climbers have compared Arjuna's west face to the north face of the Grandes Jorasses. After establishing Base Camp at 9850 feet in the wild Kijai Nalla, they set up camps at 12,150 and 15,100 feet. Mirosław Dasal, Jerzy Barszczewski and Zbigniew Skierski aimed at the 5000-foot-high central buttress. On August 11 and 12 they fixed 1650 feet of rope in an access chimney (UIAA V + , A2). On August 14 they started their final attack. On the first day they got to the top of a tower on the buttress. From there they climbed ice, cracks and slabs on the crest of the buttress. All 49 pitches were difficult. Finally on August 18 they reached the summit (6230 meters, 20,440 feet). They rappelled the ascent route and removed the fixed rope from the chimney. Tomasz Bende and Przemysław Piasecki meanwhile climbed alpine-style a 4500-foot-high route which falls directly from the south summit, mostly free. The bottom third ascended a giant wet chimney which they left on the left side. They had ten pitches in a 70° to 90° ice couloir. After traversing left again over slabs, they got to the edge of the buttress. This 46-pitch route to the south summit took six days. They reached the top on August 17. Both routes were highly demanding and not free from falling stones and ice.

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Kishtwar Shivling. Dick Renshaw and I made the first ascent of Kishtwar Shivling (c. 6000 meters, 19,685 feet). This beautiful and difficult mountain is in the Padar region in the eastern part of the Kishtwar range, lying on the ridge between the Darlang Nalla and the valley leading to the Umasi La. We left Kishtwar on August 15 and reached Machail four days later. On the fifth day we continued past the last village, Sumcham, to a comfortable Base Camp at the foot of the north face of our peak. The monsoon had started to clear at the end of August and on September 6 we left Advance Base (14,100 feet). We had already made one foray onto the north face, leaving a cache of climbing equipment. Now we climbed in a single, five-day push to the summit. The descent, involving 25 abseils and down-climbing, took a further two days. It was a superb face climb of very difficult, varied climbing: snow arêtes, a vertical sérac barrier, difficult mixed climbing, granite pitches and a very steep fluted summit icefield, reminiscent of the Andes. The weather was excellent, apart from the summit day, when a snowstorm made climbing unpleasant and views non-existent. Like its Garhwal namesake, this Shivling has no obvious easy routes. The same is true for most of the Kishtwar peaks. There is an enormous scope for demanding technical climbing at comparatively low altitude.

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