

*Kun Ascent and Attempt.* A French expedition led by Jacques Duevisson climbed Kun by its east ridge in mid August. A month later, British climbers under the leadership of John Harris Schwelm failed.

KAMAL K. GUHA, *Editor, Himavanta, India*

*Exploration of the High-Altitude Desert of Rupshu and Ascent of Mata, Southeast Ladakh.* Our members were Chetan Bhattacharji, Rajbans Talwar, Vijay Jung Thapa, Ms. Rupa Dutta, Ms. Rohini Prakash, Ms. Seema Mishra, Gautam Das, Rano Gupta, Shantanu Swargiary, Sedenshen Kikon, Dr. Anil Gurtoo, and I as leader. We were joined by ten students from St. Stephen's College, Delhi, whom we welcomed as they were willing to carry full porter loads. At the end of the first week of June, we left Pangmo Maidan (13,300 feet) near Hal village above the Spiti River. We trekked up the Takling Nala to the Chungar grazing ground, beyond which the track petered out. From camp at 16,400 feet, we crossed the Takling La (17,300 feet) to camp at Takling Sumdo at 16,000 feet. We then descended gently down the two-kilometer-wide river bed of Takhu Chu to Thatang Sumdo, where it joined the river from the Parang La Glacier to form the Pare Chu. This river has a strange course. It flows into Tibet and then is turned back into India by the Drongmar Range to meet the Spiti at Sumdo. We traveled to Raolcham. After crossing the Pare Chu for the last time to Narbu Sumdo at 15,300 feet, we had arrived in the Rupchu Desert in southeast Ladakh. The Pare Chu flows south from Narbu Sumdo to Tibet 29 kilometers away. From Narbu Sumdo we traversed the high-altitude desert to Kiangdom or Chung Tung (14,900 feet) near the southwest shore of the lake, Tso Moriri, which is 28 kilometers long and 3 to 6 kilometers wide. We spent a day taking depth readings, meeting the nomadic Changpas and climbing heights on either side of the lake. We were in a hurry to reach Karzok (15,100 feet) so as to dispose of the 29 mules to cut skyrocketing costs. Karzok is three kilometers from the northwest end of the lake. We spent several days reconnoitering the way to Mata (20,607 feet) and climbing humbler points for views of the surrounding terrain about which even the detailed maps show errors. We established Camps I, II and III at 16,600, 18,800 and 20,200 feet on June 26, 27 and 28. On June 29, Mata's summit was reached by Chetan, Seema, Rupa, Rano, Shantanu, Gautam, Dr. Gurtoo, nine of the St. Stephen's boys and three porters. The peaks in Rupshu are very easy. They have no snow on their southern sides below 20,000 feet. Their northern slopes have snow and tiny glaciers till 16,000 feet. The reason for this is the furious south-north and the west-east winds that blow all the time. Meanwhile, the rest had been exploring other features around Karzok. We took extensive depth readings in the Tso from about the same locations as Drew in 1873. The lake is shrinking and is more than 50 feet less deep. Many portions had weeds and muddy water. In 1984, when I was last there, the water had been clear. On the trek, we had to carry everything, even fuel and fodder for a few days for the mules. Parts of the Pare Chu valley and of the Rupshu desert did not even have the thorny furze that is elsewhere common. However, around the Tso's southwest end we found more fecundity than in 1984. From Karzok, a rough jeepable road