

meters, a jumping-off point for an alpine-style push for the summit.

That night we were full of optimism, but the following day, the weather seemed unsettled once again. We decided to return to base camp for a couple of days' rest while we waited for the weather to settle and then make our bid for the summit.

It wasn't to be. On the night of May 19, half a meter of snow fell at base camp. Much more must have fallen on the face. It snowed off and on for the next ten days with the mountain almost continually hidden in cloud. We were prepared to extend the expedition but there was no sign of an improvement in the weather and in the end we were very lucky to have a single clear day to rescue the equipment we had left at Camp II. We started our descent from base camp in a violent blizzard the following day.

Although the continuous bad weather had been frustrating, the area is so beautiful, our neighbors, whom we got to know well, so kind, and the team itself such a well-balanced one, none of us felt depressed as we walked back down to the road head. We were already planning our return in 1998.

SIR CHRISTIAN BONINGTON, *Alpine Climbing Group*

*Shishapangma, Attempt.* The main goal of the Slovenian Shishapangma 1997 autumn expedition was to climb the British route on the Shishapangma's southwest face. Besides that, we planned an alpine style ascent and a ski descent from the top across the British route. After two nice weeks when we put up the first and the second high camps on the British route, a period of bad weather forced us to give up on an alpine-style climb. The highest point, at about 7200 meters, was achieved by Blač Navranik, Mira Zori and Sandi Vaupoti. They were just about to put up the third high camp when the sudden snowstorm forced them to descend to the lower camps. In the following days, when there was no end to bad weather, we finished the expedition, and the last members left base camp on October 15.

FRANCI SAVENC, *Planinska zveza Slovenije*

*Shishapangma.* It was reported that Goran Kropp (Sweden) led a 12-member expedition to Shishapangma on which Renata Chlumksa became the first Swedish woman to climb above 8000 meters and Cyril Destremau managed to make the first snowboard descent from the Central Summit all the way to base camp. (*High Mountain Sports* 180)

*Gaurishankar, Northeast Ridge, Attempt.* Gaurishankar (7134m) lies on Nepal's northern border with Tibet; it is visible from Kathmandu on the northeastern horizon, and it was once thought to be the world's highest mountain until the British Survey of India made more careful measurements. All climbing attempts until this autumn on this rugged mountain were made with permits from the Nepalese government, for the Tibetan/Chinese authorities did not open it to mountaineers until a few years ago. A British attempt led by Don Whillans in the autumn of 1964 did go around from Nepal's southwestern side to the northwest in Tibet and reached 6700 meters before avalanching turned them back. Since then no one had repeated this approach; in fact, the mountain is seldom climbed from any side.

In September, two well-known Japanese mountaineers, Yasushi Yamanoi and his wife Taeko (who was known by her maiden name, Taeko Nagao, until she married Yamanoi recently), went onto the northeast ridge but were quickly turned back at 6300 meters, where the ridge became very narrow and steep and numerous mushrooms blocked the way. It was not possible to escape from the ridge because of extreme danger on the north face from many falling seracs, so they abandoned their attempt on September 23. They thought the climb might be possible in colder weather in mid-October, but they do not recommend attempting

the mountain from Tibet at all: the local people demanded a lot of extra money, and they were informed that the road leading to it is frozen after the end of October.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

*Dranang Ri, North Ridge, Attempt.* It was reported that an eight-man Japanese team led by Susumu Kobayashi attempted the unclimbed snow/ice crest of the north ridge of Dranang Ri (6801m) in 1996, reaching ca. 6000 meters before being turned back by difficulty. (*High Mountain Sports* 175)

*Cho Oyu, New Route.* It was reported that during an Out There Trekking Expedition in the pre-monsoon season, Russian guide George Kotov and American client Bill Pierson managed to find 1000 meters of new climbing on the north side of Cho Oyu. From the normal Advanced Base Camp, the two set up Camp I on the Palung La (6500m) below the north-northeast ridge climbed last year by Sebastian Rucksteiner and Oscar Cardiac. Camp II was established at 6600 meters on the prominent rib to the left of the ridge and forming the left edge of the triangular facet. After a rest at ABC, the two began climbing on May 18, reaching the 6600-meter camp the same day. On the 19th they climbed farther up the rib, camped, and continued on the next day to the top of the rib, reporting angles of up to 40° on new snow over blue ice, with the last day involving a section of waist-deep snow. From the top of the rib they traversed across to the top camp of the standard route (7600m) and made it to the summit on the 21st. (*High Mountain Sports* 181)

*Mt. Everest, North Face, Variation.* A Russian expedition led by Kazbek Khamitasayev ascended what they said was an unclimbed rib on the north face to an altitude of perhaps 7500 meters before abandoning that line and traversing left to the standard route up the north ridge to put two of their 19 climbing members, Alexandre Zelinski and Sergei Sokolov, on the summit.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY

*Mount Everest Group, Attempted Traverses.* There were two ambitious plans for very light-weight traverses via the highest point on earth (see *Nepal for that of Anatoli Boukreev*). An Italian, Reinhard Patscheider, who was an independent climber on the north side, reportedly wanted to descend the south side, but he unfortunately developed some unexplained stomach illness and after two attempts to climb the mountain was forced to go home without having gotten any higher than 7100 meters. He had climbed from the north on a permit arranged by a Polish mountaineer who actually did most of his own climbing with an Indonesian team.

Patscheider's intention had been to go down the southeast ridge, which forms part of the international border, to the South Col, the very high saddle between Everest and Lhotse, and from there descend the standard Nepalese route. He was enrolled on the Lhotse permit of a British-led commercial expedition, and the leader of that team left for him at the South Col, as requested by Patscheider, a tent, sleeping bag and mat, stove, fuel and food. These items still await his arrival.

Although Patscheider had put his name on two permits, one from the Tibetan authorities and the other from the Nepalese, such a trans-border traverse would have been illegal, and he could have gotten into trouble if he had actually carried out his intention and been discovered. All permits require climbers to go down the same routes they go up. Furthermore, there is no agreement between the two countries for such border crossings, and the Nepalese penalty for this can be banishment from climbing in Nepal for five years.

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