

take a picture of the dead blind guy.” However, there was no picture to be taken. Guided by a bell on the rucksack of a team-mate ahead of him and by his own feeling and probing, Weißenmayer, with three team-mates and at least one Sherpa, arrived at the top of the World at 10:05 a.m. on May 25 and descended safely over the next few days.

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*Everest, post monsoon attempts.* In stark contrast to the unprecedented hordes of climbers on Everest during the spring, the post monsoon season saw practically no one on the mountain. For the first time since autumn 1970 not a single team came to the Nepalese side of the peak and in Tibet there were only three (see elsewhere).

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*For more on Everest from the north side, see the Tibet reports.*

*Lhotse Middle, first ascent.* The most impressive all of accomplishments in the spring was the first ascent of Lhotse Middle (8413m), which although not exactly a mountain in its own right, stands only 50 meters lower than Makalu and was widely recognised to be the highest unclimbed summit in the world. Various expeditions in recent years had planned to reach it from the west via the main summit of Lhotse, or from the east via Lhotse Shar. Some had tried the south face of the Lhotse-Lhotse Shar ridge. Most of these teams had come from the former Soviet Union but all had failed to make a serious attempt from east or west above the two summits.

In the spring 12 Russian climbers led by Sergei Timofeev took an entirely different approach. First they ascended the Normal Route on Everest as far as the South Col, then they moved along Lhotse’s unclimbed north ridge and out on to the previously untouched north or Kangshung face, which is technically in Tibet. Finally, they climbed up to the middle summit’s west ridge.

The Nepalese Government had not officially brought Lhotse Shar on to the permitted list when the Russians established Base Camp at the standard Everest site on April 1. As with several previous expeditions attempting the Middle Summit, they were operating under a permit for Lhotse Main and with the help of another expedition comprising just two men, Simone Moro and Denis Urubko, who planned to attempt an Everest-Lhotse traverse (see elsewhere), began to equip the Normal Everest route up to the South Col. By the end of the month they had the route opened and much of the necessary equipment up at Camp 4 on the Col, but still no permit from the Nepalese Government. However, on May 16, two weeks before the proposed end of the expedition, the vice-secretary of the Ministry of Tourism visited Everest Base Camp to hand over personally to the Russians the long awaited permission.

Over the next days Alexey Bolotov, Petr Kuznetsov, Evgeny Vinogradsky, and Timofeev pushed the route across the upper Kangshung Face, fixing more than 1000 meters of rope. On the 22nd they eventually gained the foot of the rock wall below the ridge. The steepness of some of the climbing here was estimated to be at least 65 degrees. Finally, on the 23rd, the Russians climbed a difficult leftward-slanting snow ramp leading to the lower part of the ridge that descends east from Lhotse’s Main Summit. They climbed down this ridge to the lowest point and then up the final 70 meters or so of very steep and narrow crest towards the top of Lhotse Middle. The four arrived a little below the top at 3:00 p.m. but felt the snow conditions on the