

the way, especially where a rock buttress appears near the top.

The going was delicate in places, the ice thin and porous. Climbing together with two tools each, occasionally placing the deadman for protection, we took the rock buttress at 6,050m in order to avoid the rotten snow-ice as it steepened to over 70° above. We traversed east across the buttress then followed its right edge up a steep snow field to reach the summit in three pitches. From the sharp snow arête on the summit an impressive view extends in all directions, from Everest to Thamserku and Cho Oyu. After an hour on the summit, we began our descent at 3 p.m., leaving a string of prayer flags fluttering in the slight breeze.

Night soon fell and the temperature plummeted to -25°C. Our toes suffered a little frost nip but the full moon and the sight of bobbing headtorches coming to greet us soon warmed our spirits. We were back in camp 2 by 9 p.m., happily reunited with our friends just as a violent wind storm began. The next day's 1,200m descent to base camp would be long. Route Information: southwest ridge, named En Tente Cordiale. Location: Latitude: 27° 58' 03", Longitude: 86° 40' 58". Altitude: 6,186m (according to Schneider Map 'Khumbu Himal 1:50,000').

DUNCAN WILSON, U.K.

*Nuptse East 1, south face pillar attempt.* Snow conditions made climbing very difficult for a noted Russian mountaineer, Valeri Babanov (37), in his unsuccessful attempt at a solo ascent of a pillar on the south face of Nuptse, the lengthy mountain that stands immediately south of Everest. His aim was to make the first ascent of one of its eastern summits, which presents such difficulties that it was described as "only for Babanov" by Vladislav Terzyul, a highly successful Ukrainian climber who has summited 12 of the world's fourteen 8,000-meter peaks, including Dhaulagiri I last autumn.

Babanov arrived at his base camp on the Lhotse Nup Glacier at 5,200m on September 19, but new snowfall and avalanches prevented him from starting up the mountain until the 29th. His original plan was to fix 500m of rope on the lower part of the pillar, then go to acclimatize on the 1961 British south face route to an altitude of 6,900m before making his push for the top of the pillar in three or four days. He said before leaving Kathmandu for this climb that he expected it to be "the most challenging climb I have ever done." He would have to scale a vertical distance of 2,500m (8,000') from base camp to his goal, the summit known as Nuptse East I, which is 7,804m high on Nuptse's east ridge and only 57m lower than the main summit. Approximately 600m to 700m of Babanov's route would be highly technical, and then big snow mushrooms presented themselves above that.

Babanov had no official permit to climb the 1961 South Face route in addition to his pillar, so he devoted himself entirely to the pillar. He spent days moving up and down the pillar fixing 1,000m of rope until his supply was exhausted. He calculated that he would need to fix 200m more to overcome the steepest section, known as "le Diable" (the Devil), before attempting to go for the summit. Babanov reached an altitude of 6,300m at the bottom of the Diable on October 26, four weeks after he had begun his attack on the pillar. He now had no more rope and "was very, very tired," strong winds had started blowing, and he had other commitments elsewhere. So he abandoned the climb. He wants to return next autumn but not solo. He would like one friend to come with him, partly so he would not have to carry all the rope and other gear needed for this very technical route.

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, Nepal