

*Makalu, southeast ridge ascent.* After they had abandoned their attempt on the northeast ridge from Tibet, reported elsewhere, Frenchmen Yannick Graziani, Christian Trommsdorff, and Patrick Wagnon decided to try the southeast ridge. It had been in sight during their attempt on the northeast ridge, looked less laden with snow and by that stage was known to have a British party in-situ, fixing ropes. Packing big sacks, they walked up the straightforward glacier south-east of Makalu, crossed the ca 5,500m col on the frontier between the end of the true southeast ridge and Peak 6,100m (immediately northwest of 6,477m Peak 3), then descended the far side in the direction of the Standard Barun Base Camp. Before reaching this, at a height of ca 5,250m, they climbed to the lower continuation of the southeast ridge. Two days after leaving their Tibetan Base, all three were at the British Camp 1. Here, they joined forces with the British climbers, helping to fix ropes up to 7,300m, where Camp 3 was installed around the May 14. Relations between both teams were good from the outset and by the 15th the three French had descended and were walking all the way back to their Tibetan Base Camp to enjoy a good rest.

They were not back at Camp 1 until the 22nd (approximately 12 hours travel from their Tibet Base Camp). The following day they climbed to the British Intermediate Camp, where the weather promptly turned bad again. Trommsdorff and Wagnon decided to descend to Base for two nights but Graziani chose to wait. All three were united on the 25th and as the weather looked promising, they moved to Camp 2 the following day. The day after they reached Camp 3 (7,300m) and proceeded to dig out a tent left from nearly three weeks previously. It had not snowed for four days and conditions seemed good with little or no risk of avalanche. In the back of their minds was the hope that they could complete the route in a single push from here and traverse the summit, descending the Normal Route via the Makalu La.

On the 28th they moved up the ridge (ca 55° with a final mixed pitch) to 7,600m, where a descent can be made to the Eastern Cwm. Here, they first called for a weather forecast, were told the next three days would be fine, and then climbed down to the snowy amphitheatre, leaving 150m of rope fixed to safeguard their return. Underfoot conditions in the Cwm proved quite good and they moved up to camp at 7,600m.

During that night the wind approached 100km/hour and as they had only brought the inner tent and two sleeping bags between three, it was grim. Fortunately, at sunrise the wind stopped. Leaving at 9:00 a.m., all three reached the back of the Cwm at 7,800m (and one kilometer from the tent) in two hours. The weather was excellent and the temperature relatively mild as they climbed up to the rimaye at 8,050m with Graziani, who was moving strongly, in the lead. Here, Trommsdorff turned back, leaving the others to continue. The slope above, deep snow over slabby rock, was strenuous and at 4:00 p.m. Wagnon turned back from a height of ca 8,250m. Graziani reached the ridge, then overcoming a 30m rock step (about III), continued up the corniced arête to arrive at the highest point around 4:30 p.m. A grueling and even more strenuous descent followed, until at 8:00 p.m., just before nightfall, he regained his two companions in the tent. Next day, the 30th, all three made an exhausting climb down to the British intermediate camp, finding most of the ropes and their small cache of food and equipment had been removed. After a hard night, Base Camp was reached in heavy rain. The trio then had to make two hard days' walk back over the frontier to Kharta, in order to be on schedule for their flights home. This would appear to be the first time the lower south east ridge has been continued to the summit but the entire crest, super-integral, has yet to have an ascent.