

## MANASLU HIMAL

*P2, second ascent, via partial new route.* On October 13 Ukrainians Sergei Bublyk, Sergei Kovalev, Aleksander Lavrynenko, and Orest Verbytsky, from a five-member expedition led by Kovalev, made the second ascent of P2 (a.k.a. Simnang Himal; 6,251m) via the east ridge, which they approached from the Lidanda Glacier to the south. The first ascent of this peak, which lies on the long east ridge of Peak 29 southeast of Manaslu, was made in May 2001, the year in which it was opened, by Mistislav Gorbenko, Vadim Leontiev, Sergei Pugachov, and Mikhaylo Zagimyak. Those four Ukrainians reached the col on the east ridge from the Pungen Glacier to the north and were part of a large expedition that eventually climbed a new route on Manaslu (AAJ 2002, p.405).

ELIZABETH HAWLEY, AAC *Honorary Member, Nepal.*

## JUGAL HIMAL

*Gyalzen, attempt and map identity.* Our four-person, primarily American party planned to attempt Gyalzen (6,151m) on the Tibetan border. We were not successful, partially due to bad weather but more because of confusion as to identity of the peak. Gyalzen stands close to Leonpo Gang (Big White Peak) and can only be seen clearly from farther away (30km from where it is possible to view the entire Jugal). The Gyalzen marked on the HGM Finn Map is not the correct peak. The peak climbed by the 1955 women's expedition and named Gyalzen is called Gumba Chuli on the map. This was confirmed by Evelyn McNicol, who accompanied our team and was part of the 1955 expedition. After figuring all this out there was no time left to explore Gyalzen, other than climb onto a ridge coming down from Phurba Chyachu.

BECKY HARRISON

*Editor's note: The first ascent of Gyalzen Peak was made on May 11, 1955, by the south face and southwest ridge by British women Monica Jackson and Elizabeth Stark, with Sherpas Mingma Gyalzen and Ang Temba. It was named after Mingma. Evelyn Camrass, her name then, was the third U.K. member of this team from the Ladies Scottish Climbing Club but did not attempt the mountain. This is generally regarded as the first all-woman Himalayan expedition and is recorded in Jackson and Stark's book, Tent in the Clouds (1956). The peak has only received two more recorded ascents, by Japanese teams in 1960 and 1961. There are several instances of peaks being misnamed on the HGM map, generally the result of HGM giving misinformation to map makers.*

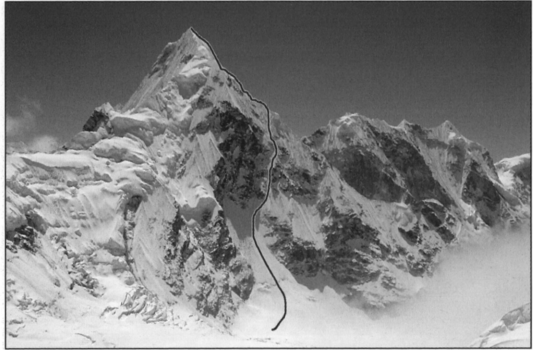
## ROLWALING HIMAL

*Drangang Ri, second ascent, by a new route; Ripimo Shar, possible new route; Chekigo, first authorized ascent.* The goals of the Academic Alpine Club Zurich expedition to the Rolwaling were Drangnag Ri (6,757m) and Chekigo (6,257m). The team members were I (Scottish, leader), Oliver von Rotz (Swiss, deputy), Monika Hronska (Swiss, medic), Paul Hartmann (U.S.), Beatriz Vidondo (Spanish), and Marco Scarsi (Italian). We were joined by the incomparable Dhan Kumar as sirdar/cook and the equally hard-working Phule as assistant. The final "mem-

ber,” our liaison officer, accompanied the expedition as far as the roadhead at Dolakha, doing a good job only as a living example of the corrupt and clueless Nepalese ruling classes. He had never been out of Kathmandu and was dumbfounded by the sight of our porters gearing up: “Are they really going to carry that?”

Our first breakfast on the trail was disturbed by local Maoist rebels, one carrying a concealed revolver, who asked for 3,000Rs per foreigner to enter an area they controlled; we paid 2,000Rs (\$28) each in exchange for a stamped chit authorizing our presence.

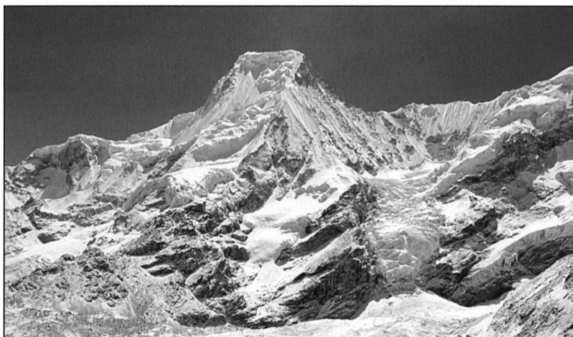
The rebels also made good stereotypes of their role: Nepalese society’s bottom-feeders who have found an easier living in threats than in work. The trek took us from the rushing blue waters of the Bhote Kosi under the ramparts of Gaurishankar and into the Sherpa region of the upper Rolwaling. At the natural dam of the Tsho Rolpa we turned north along the lateral moraine of the Ripimo Shar Glacier, and on April 24 found an acceptable site for base camp at Drangnak Kharka (4,900m). Directly above base lie Pk. 5,946m and Kang Nachugo, while across the glacier are the commanding bulk of Chobutse, the fluted peak of Dragkar Go, Pk. 6,665m, and other 6,000m points leading north to Drangnag Ri.



Drangnag Ri (6,757m) seen across the Ripimo Shar Glacier from Pt 5,965m on the Nepal-Tibet border. The new route via the west face and southwest ridge is marked. The peaks on the ridge running south (right skyline) are unnamed, the first being Pt 6,508m and the far right Pt 6,662m. Bruce Normand



Looking southwest at Chobutse (6,686m, on the left), Chukyma Go (6,259m, rising above the cloud in the middle and situated on the south side of the main Rolwaling Valley), and Pt 5,981m (on the near right, above the Ripimo Shar Glacier). Chobutse (a.k.a. Chobuje) has been climbed at least three times, the first in 1972 by Germans, Gustav and Nikolaus Harder, Peter Vogler, and Wolfgang Weinzierl, via the northwest ridge facing the camera (between light and shade). The right skyline (southwest ridge) was climbed by New Zealanders in 1985 and repeated in 2002 by a Frenchman, solo. Bruce Normand



The unnamed Pt 6,662m rising above the east bank of the Ripimo Shar Glacier. There is no record of this mountain having been climbed. *Bruce Normand*



The west face of Chekigo (6,257m), showing the route followed by Normand and von Rotz. The bergschrund at the base of the final snow/ice face is at ca. 5,950m. *Bruce Normand*

Unstable weather plagued our acclimatization, and a vanguard needed showshoes to reconnoiter up-glacier. Oliver and I, then Oliver and Paul, carried loads to a dump at 5,300m, before Paul and I established an advanced base, on April 30, at 5,500m on the Ripimo Shar Glacier, below the west face of Drangnag Ri. On May 1 we crossed the upper glacier to the snow dome of Pk. 5,965m, scoring the expedition's first summit but seeing nothing in the clouds.

The other four climbers later reached advanced base and enjoyed a beautiful day on Pk. 5,965m, with impressive views of Drangnag Ri, Pk. 6,705m, Menlungtse, and Kang Nachugo. Paul and I tried the west ridge of Pk. 6,705m, also referred to as Ripimo Shar, turning back in a whiteout at 6,500m. At base camp we planned strategy. The southwest ridge of Drangnag Ri was in much worse condition than in pictures we'd seen, and the north side was simi-

larly impassable. Paul and I were the only takers for the technical difficulties of its west face.

Oliver and I started the summit campaign on May 7, with the west ridge of Ripimo Shar, enjoying spectacular sunrise views of Menlungtse and Cho Oyu. The "climbing" was mostly deep trail-breaking. Rising cumulus beat us to the summit, but there was no afternoon snow. The next day was cloudless, as Paul and I readied ourselves in advanced base.

The triangular west face of Drangnag Ri has a central buttress of pink granitic rock. The left side is heavily serac-hung, and the right is fluted and cornice-hung. The safest route skirts the rock on its right. By sun-up we had crossed the snowfield below the buttress and were tackling four mixed pitches, the last a full ropelength of high-quality 80° ice. Beyond were more ice gullies and a soft-snow traverse, leading into a dripping but refreezing exit couloir, where night fell. At the top the ice turned to impassable meringue, and I fell 20m, landing back beside Paul, fortunately without injuring either of us. We found a crawl-through crevasse in a neighboring fluting and settled inside for a bivouac.

The weather next morning was perfect, but Paul had severe leg cramps and decided he wasn't going anywhere. However, we couldn't descend before dark, so I picked my way cautiously to, and then along, the convoluted ridge, across a snowfield, and onto the summit

crest. Clouds blew in from the west but cleared partially as I reached the top, at 4 p.m. on May 10. I had excellent views of the Rolwaling and Khumbu. I retraced my steps, avoided the ridge by climbing down 60° ice on its east side, and was back at the cave by nightfall. Leaving at midnight, we made 15 rappels down our route to the lower snowfield and were back in base by evening.

Unstable weather returned as we moved to our final project, a lightweight attempt on Chekigo. Now well acclimatized, Monika, Oliver, and I hiked to a new base camp at 5,000m, arriving in a snowstorm. The next day we climbed the glacier, to be engulfed in a blizzard near the Manlung La (5,600m). The morning brought clear skies on a north wind, and we headed for the direct west face. Monika lacked the confidence to solo the exposed approach ridge, turning back to wait at high camp. Oliver and I wallowed into the snow bowl below the face, then climbed eight pitches of straightforward 55° ice/névé. We completed the first recorded ascent at 2:30 p.m. on May 15, behind returning cumulus. Our rappel descent was efficient and the walk-out quick, trading the narrow ridge for a sprint down a serac-threatened slope to reach high camp by dark.

The trek out was uneventful, although the bus journey back to Kathmandu may have been the most dangerous event of the expedition. For the team it was a successful venture and a rich experience, but also one clouded by the current state of Nepal. The Maoist rebellion is finally a countrywide scourge, met only with political and military incompetence and paralysis. The vanishing tourist dollar is being replaced by insecurity, poverty, and fear, reflected in more begging, more praying, less civility, and fewer smiles on once-bright faces. Can this sort of damage be repaired?

The Rolwaling expedition would like to thank the Academic Alpine Club Zurich for its generous financial support. We are indebted to Chris Bonington, Eva Hronska, and especially Takanobu Sakagaki for their help.

BRUCE NORMAND, *Switzerland*



Early morning on May 15, as Bruce Normand heads along the ridge toward the snow basin below the west face of Chekigo (6,257m). The main top is on the left. Normand and Oliver von Rotz made the first authorized ascent of this peak via the ice face directly below the summit. *Oliver von Rotz*

*Tengi Ragi Tau East, first ascent of peak via south pillar.* In autumn 2004 a team of young French alpinists attempted to climb a new route on the northeast face of Teng Kangpoche. They were unable to achieve this, due to high objective and avalanche dangers, and settled for a new route on Phamlahaka [a.k.a. Tangi Ragi Tau Southeast; 6,187m; first known ascent in 2002 via the south ridge; *AAJ* 2003, p. 382—Ed.], which they climbed via the striking southwest ridge (Le Sourire de Migma; *AAJ* 2005, p.389).

The team's main players returned in October 2005 for an attempt on the neighbouring, higher, Tengi Ragi Tau East and found much drier conditions than they had the year before. Maxime Belleville, Sébastien Corret, Louis Laurent, Julien Herry, and Xavier Vimal, all aspirant high mountain guides from Chamonix, spent time acclimatizing, with an ascent of nearby Par-