

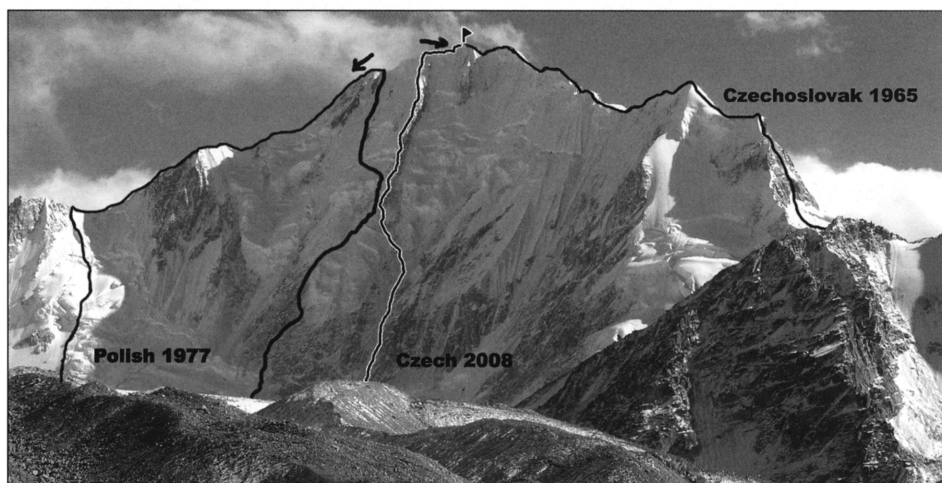
## Afghanistan

### HIGH HINDU KUSH – WAKHAN CORRIDOR

*Koh-e-Uparisina (6,260m), northwest pillar.* For the second stage of our three-part DEVOLD Triple North Walls expedition, Jan Doudlebsky and I visited the Hindu Kush. We were inspired by an old book of photos from the 1965 Czechoslovak Uparisina expedition; as a boy I went to this book, dreaming of adventures. The dream came true in September. We rented a car with driver in Kabul and drove for three days to Ishmurch, showing our Ministry of Tourism permit at three police and military checkpoints en route. (The permit was arranged by three friends who work for an aid organization building schools and wells and who accompanied us to the mountains.) In Ishmurch we hired porters and after two days walk reached base camp near the head of the Ishmurch Valley.

Our plan was a new route on the north face of Koh-e-Uparisina, which dominates the valley. Our chosen line began with a steep ice gully and featured a serac barrier at one-third height. It appeared we could turn this barrier on the left via a rock pillar splitting the face. In its upper section this pillar became a sharp snow arête leading to the summit ridge. On the 11th we erected our tent atop a giant boulder and awaited a spell of good weather. On the 13th we climbed the initial 40m of vertical ice into the gully, moving fast to minimize the icefall risk from seracs that threaten the entire lower wall. But the ice was brittle and our progress not as fast as we would like. The terrain was 70°, with several steeper sections. In the evening we reached the rock pillar and dug out a ledge for our bivouac sack. That night ice avalanches fell past the ledge, cutting off retreat. The only sensible escape became upward.

September 14: We continued up the pillar on thin, brittle ice and before dusk erected our bivouac sack on another small platform. The next day we climbed to the end of the rock and started up the exposed snow arête. The face steepened, and at midday we tunneled through the cornice to reach the summit ridge. Following the crest for 120m, passing one awkward step, we



The ca 1,600m north face of Koh-e-Uparisina (6,260m). On the left is the 1977 Polish route up the north face and their descent of the northeast ridge. The 2008 Czech route on the northwest pillar has been named Sweet 65. On the right is the route of the first ascent in 1965 via the north spur of Uparisina West (6,050m), and the connecting west ridge. This was the route used in descent by the 2008 duo. *Marek Holecek*



Close to the summit of Koh-e-Uparisina (6,260m), after making the first ascent of the northwest pillar. Marek Holecek

arrived at the main summit. We followed the endless west ridge down. At 6,000m we cut a platform in the snow for the night. It was cold, but there were superb views over China, Pakistan, Tajikistan, and many Afghan mountains farther west. The next day we descended to the end of the ridge, then rappelled 250m down a rocky pillar to reach the glacier. That night we regained our tent, completing the round trip in 82 hours of alpine-style climbing, and the next day arrived at base camp. We called our route on the northwest pillar Sweet '65 (1,600m, WI 5, 70°), as a tribute to our brave countrymen who first summited the peak.

MAREK HOLECEK, Czech Republic

*Editors note: The 1965 Czechoslovakian expedition was led by Vladimír Sedivý. On August 10 Vilem Hekel, Radovan Kuchar, Miles Matras, and Josef Psotka made the first ascent of 6,050m Uparisina West by the north spur. On the 28th Kuchar, Matras, and Psotka climbed to this summit and continued east along the connecting ridge to make the first ascent of the higher Uparisina East. A Polish team climbed the main summit again in 1977. From this 11-member Krakow expedition led by Janusz Mascka, R. Bieniek, B. Strzelski, and R. Urbanik made an alpine-style ascent of the north face, left of the northwest pillar, and descended the unclimbed northeast ridge. This was considered one of the outstanding ascents that year in the then-popular Afghan mountains and was remarkable for the era. The new Czech route is arguably the most significant climbed in Afghanistan since the Soviet invasion of 1979.*

Wakhan Corridor, Qala-e-Voust (Qala-e-Hurst or Ust) Glacier exploration; Peak 5,049m; Peak 5,880m attempt. In August Elisabetta Galli, Lucia Foppoli, Angelo Quattrini, and I finished exploring the Qala-e-Voust Glacier in a side valley of the Wakhan Corridor. It is two main valleys west of the Kezget. Two years earlier a group, including Galli and me, visited this valley, but we were blocked by exceptional snowfall (one meter in one night). This year we completed the exploration and found that the area's seven peaks of 5,500–5,900m are suitable for mountaineering. We climbed a virgin peak of 5,049m, and then Galli, Afiat Khan, and I attempted a difficult summit of 5,880m but had to give up after 600m because ice conditions were impossible.