

EXPEDITIONS

MIR SEMIR. The following is a short account of a two-man attempt on Mir Semir, the second highest peak in the Afghan Hindu Kush (shown as a spot height 6059 m. on the Army/Air map, Sheet NI-42, 1/1,000,000).

The party, consisting of Hugh Carless, myself, three Tajick drivers and three pack horses to carry food and equipment, set off from Jangalak, a hamlet in the Panjshir valley, on July 10. On the 14th we set up a camp at 15,500 ft. on the north side of the mountain at the termination of the glacial moraine of the West glacier (there are two glaciers on the north side, the East and West, separated from one another by a rock wall at about 16,500 ft., above which the North-west Buttress rises like some colossal Dolomite).

Two days' exhausting reconnaissance showed us that the mountain is probably unclimbable on the north-west and west sides and very difficult, except for the strongest parties, from the South-west glacier which is approached by a very circuitous route through a break in one of the outlying ridges.

We decided to try the South face and reached the upper part of the Chomar valley on the marches of Nuristan on July 17, having crossed the bottom of the East glacier which debouches into it. Here we made camp in a magnificent cirque of mountains at 15,000 ft.

We were now fit and acclimatised except for recurrent gastritis and on the 18th the two of us left for the East ridge by way of one of the four glaciers on this side of the mountain. On the rock, at 17,500 ft., climbing became very dangerous—few belays, iced rock, everything rotten and breaking away in the hands. At 11.30 we reached the ridge, 18,000 ft., and like the edge of a gigantic saw. The summit looked deceptively close but an impassable pinnacle blocked the view of the rest of the ridge.

On the 19th we established a camp on an ibex trail at 17,500 ft. with the aid of two of the drivers, who were understandably reluctant to be in such a situation. Here Hugh and myself spent an uneasy night disturbed by heavy falls of rock and an electric storm on the mountains of Nuristan to the east. We left at 4.30, first light, and made very slow progress to the ridge, the new route planned to avoid the great pinnacle being far more difficult, finally reaching it at 9.30 by an extremely steep slope of snow and ice. On the ridge itself the snow was moderately soft and very hard on the North face.

By 1.15 we were just over 19,000 ft. with two pinnacles between us and the snow slope to the summit, and about 800 ft. below it. With our



MIR SEMIR FROM THE SOUTH-EAST.

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dwindling reserves of strength we estimated that we should need four hours to reach it. With extreme reluctance and some emotion we abandoned the attempt as we could not afford to be benighted on the ridge without tents or sleeping-bags. From this point hundreds of peaks and glaciers of the Hindu Kush, all completely unknown, were visible. Below us to the north were the 3,000-ft. snow slopes leading to the East glacier.

At 1.45 we began the descent and reached the col on the ridge at 6 p.m. in a blizzard blowing about force 8 from the west. From the col we got down a very bad couloir in which a lot of rock was falling, dislodged by the wind. The last part of the descent was in darkness and we reached the ibex camp at 9 p.m., completely exhausted. There we found one of the drivers who very courageously had come up to look after us. The next day we went down to the Base Camp.

The sun is the worst enemy on Mir Semir ; there is no shade at all at midday. Dehydration is very rapid and the temptation to drink cold water is very great, but it must be resisted. We found the best thing to be tepid sugared coffee carried in a thermos.

G. E. NEWBY.

ALPHUBEL. Westgrat. August 6, 1956. J. T. H. Allen, J. W. Gatiss and G. F. Dixon.

This ridge was first ascended by E. Wyss-Dunant with two guides on July 27, 1945, and has apparently never been repeated.¹ The ridge projects in an almost due westerly direction from the northern summit of the Alphubel into the Weingarten glacier, its foot being marked 3242 m. on the Carte Nationale. We reached this point at 6.15 a.m., about two hours from the Täsch Hut, and gained the crest by a rocky couloir a few yards along its northern flank. For about 800 ft. the ridge was easy and rather loose but thereafter the angle steadily increased and the climbing was excellent with a number of pitches of about 'very difficult' standard. We reached the summit at 1.40 p.m. but were hampered by a high wind and intermittent snowfall on the upper half of the ridge. An average party should be able to climb the ridge in about five hours in good conditions. This climb can be recommended as an alternative to the Rotgrat to those who like a little more difficult rock than the latter route provides.

Just to the south of the Westgrat there is another much steeper ridge known as the Westrippe, which was climbed by Wyss-Dunant in 1946. It appears to be a magnificent rock climb.

G. F. DIXON.

¹ But see *Die Alpen*, September 1956. Eight climbers on three ropes, led by Xavier Kalt, climbed this ridge on July 22, 1946, during a *semaine clubistique*.—EDITOR.

ANDES. In February and March 1956 R. J. F. Taylor and A. Wailes-Fairbairn spent six months in the Argentine based on Punta de Vacas in Mendoza province.

A fortnight of acclimatisation was undertaken in the Cordillera de los Penitentes, during which Taylor and Fairbairn made the second ascents of Cerros Zurbriggen, Reichert, and La Mano, while N. Gallop of the Bank of London and South America, with Panyagua, a local policeman, added Cerro Fitzgerald. All these peaks and Cerro Güssfeldt, the last peak of this range, were first climbed by the Buenos Aires Andinista Club in 1953.

Then the exploration of the East ridge of Aconcagua, begun by Marmillod earlier in the year, was continued. This ridge falls in three distinct rock steps and the initial problem is to by-pass the unclimbable second step to reach the foot of the final obstacle. Marmillod had broken out on to the South face but was unable to find a way through. Taylor and Fairbairn tried a couloir to the north and were turned back by stonefalls at about 19,800 ft. The only attraction of this ridge is that no-one has climbed it.

A short visit was made at the end of the season to the Plomo area and a belated attempt made on the North-east ridge of Cerro Polleras. This mountain has a magnificent three-mile ridge running N.W. incorporating a number of minor summits.

T. H. Crombie provided much useful information and gave an introduction to Señor J. F. Fino, Secretary of the Federacion de Ski y Andinismo of the Argentine. Señor Fino and Señor Hauthal, President of the Federacion, gave us every possible help. At Mendoza Dr. A. E. Magnani and his wife were kindness itself. Due to the efforts of the consul at Buenos Aires there were no customs difficulties.

A. WAILES-FAIRBAIRN.

AIGUILLE DE BLAITIÈRE. R. Gervais and R. de Vivie have repeated the Brown-Whillans route on the West face.

B. A. Jillott, J. A. G. Emery and D. Lawton made a variation to the left of the Leininger-Neuenschwander route on the East face.

AIGUILLES DU DIABLE. On July 31, J. N. Mather and A. Ashworth did the traverse, omitting L'Isolée which was badly iced.

AIGUILLE DU MOINE. Hermann Buhl climbed the Contamine route on the East face alone in three hours last August. The East face was also climbed by M. J. Cunningham and J. S. Hobhouse.

AIGUILLE DU PEIGNE. P. S. Nelson and M. J. Keen climbed the North ridge *intégrale* last August.

AIGUILLE NOIRE DE PEUTEREY. The North ridge was climbed for the first time on July 23-25 by J. Couzy and R. Desmaison. S. G. McH. Clark and M. Gravina descended the North ridge (see article 'Two on the Peuterey').

The South ridge was climbed on July 27-28 by J. N. Mather and A. Ashworth with a bivouac at the fifth tower; also by D. Davis and D. H. Briggs who were caught in a storm and bivouacked on the Pointe Bich.

On August 10, 1956, the South ridge was climbed by two parties: F. Truslow, a sixteen-year-old American, with Ubaldo Rey, and Richard Ayrton with Eddy Petrig and Enrico Rey. In spite of a thunderstorm en route both parties completed the descent without a bivouac.

AIGUILLE DU PLAN. On July 23 S. G. McH. Clark and M. Gravina climbed the North face and the ascent was repeated a few days later by D. Davis and D. H. Briggs.

AIGUILLE VERTE, Couturier Couloir. D. P. Davis, D. H. Briggs and R. Colledge.

AILEFROIDE CENTRALE, North face. August, 1956. Second ascent, Caseneuve and C. Dufourmantelle.

ARGENTINE, PETIT DIÈDRE. First ascent, August 4, 1956, R. R. E. Chorley and M. J. Ball. 380 ft., very severe. Described as resembling Pedestal on Clogwyn du'r Arddu.

BADILE, North ridge. R. E. Kendell and P. R. C. Steele.

BREITHORN, Younggrat. July 26, M. J. Harris, J. F. Mawe and G. D. Roberts (from Bétemps hut). August 13, P. Nelson and M. J. Keen (from the Gandegg).

CIMA GRANDE DI LAVAREDO, North face. D. Whillans and P. Greenwood.

CIMA PICCOLA, SPIGOLO GIALLO. P. H. Biven and T. Peck.

CIMA SU ALTO, North-west face direct. Ninth ascent, D. Whillans and P. Greenwood, in fourteen hours. The eighth ascent, by A. Aste and F. Susatti on July 13-16, required three bivouacs owing to bad weather.

DENT DU REQUIN. August 12, C. W. F. Noyce, A. D. M. Cox, Sir J. Hunt started in the East face direct, but found the account in the Vallot guide unhelpful; they got off on Variant 102 and finished on the Dibona route.

GRAND CAPUCIN, South face. First ascent, July 24-26. C. Asper, M. Bron, M. Grossi and M. Morel. The Genevese route was followed (July 31-August 2) by a Belgian party, J. Alzetta, A. Capel and J. Duchesne.

The East face was climbed repeatedly, and has been climbed without bivouac. R. O. Downes and D. Whillans were caught in a storm on it, spent 18 hours in a polythene bag and eventually roped off in continuing bad weather.

MATTERHORN, North face. July 26. K. Diemberger and S. Wolfgang, 17 hours.

OBER GABELHORN, South face. August 1, P. S. Nelson and A. K. Rawlinson.

L'OLAN, North-west wall of North summit. First ascent, August 3-5, J. Couzy and R. Desmaison.

PETIT DRU, West face. August 9-11, J. Lehne and S. Löwe. August 10-11, H. Buhl and M. Schmuck.

The South-west pillar was climbed (23-26 July) for the second time by ten climbers combined from three parties from Lecco, Geneva and Paris. The third ascent (T. Egger and H. Raditschnig) took place on July 31 and August 1.

PIZ GEMELLI, Flatiron ridge. G. J. Fraser and M. J. O'Hara.

POINTE SUPERIEURE DE PIERRE JOSEPH, North-east couloir. First ascent, August 5, J. A. G. Emery and B. A. Jillott. The bergschrund took an hour, the only technical difficulty. The couloir is about 500 m. from schrund to cornice, at angle of 55° steepening below the cornice.

ZINAL ROTHORN, East face direct (Roch route). August 10. P. Nelson and M. J. Keen.

PYRENEES. The Tour du Marboré North face was attempted by R. J. H. Chambers and W. G. B. Turrall on August 16. They followed a line indicated by twin cracks up a corner somewhat to the right of previous attempts. Much traversing and a redescent interrupted upward progress. They were stopped by a bent piton left by Cassin. On September 29 and 30 C. Dufourmantelle and J. Ravier made the first ascent of this face; they followed the line of earlier attempts by the prominent *dièdre*.

On August 15, R. J. H. Chambers and W. G. B. Turrall did a new direct finish to the Voie Chandelier on the Mur de la Cascade. Above the finish of the Voie Chandelier proper three hard pitches (put at V,

V and VI inf.) of 50, 30 and 70 ft. lead to easier climbing to the top of the wall. The Voie Chandelier was also climbed by P. R. C. Steele's party.

W. W. Marks, W. G. B. Turrall, M. James and P. R. C. Steele climbed Vignemale, North face, which they describe as superb and absolutely inescapable. They also climbed the Cirque de Gavarnie by the three walls to the right of the Grande Cascade, i.e. the Castagnez-Vergez route on the Mur de la Cascade, the Grand Dièdre and the Troisième Etage. This is believed to be the first ascent of the Cirque by any route other than the ordinary.

CORDILLERA BLANCA. Chacaraju was climbed by a French expedition on July 31. The party (Davaille, Gaudin, Jenny, Sennelier, Souriac and Terray) followed the North face and East ridge. Terray thought the last 300 ft. the hardest ice-climbing he had done.

The same party climbed Taulliraju by the North face and North-east ridge.

LONDON SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS HIMALAYAN EXPEDITION. This party completed the traverse of the Biafo-Hispar glacier system and made first ascents of three mountains of about 20,000 ft.

SCORESBY LAND, EAST GREENLAND. W. D. Brooker and others climbed an unknown peak of about 5,000 ft. in the Werner Mountains and one of about 5,500 ft. in the Erzberg. In the Staunings Range, they were turned back on summit ridge of the highest peak, but succeeded on two others of 4,500 and 5,300 ft.

OXFORD UNIVERSITY EXPEDITION TO HAMBURG LAND, WEST GREENLAND. This expedition (M. F. W. Holland, I. C. Bennett, I. O. M. Morin, Miss G. R. Sutton and Miss D. N. Morin) spent seven weeks in the region of the Sukkertoppen ice-cap. They climbed Atter by the West ridge and eight unnamed virgin peaks of about 7,000 ft.