

THE FIRST ASCENT OF HARAMOSH

By H. ROISS

(Translated by Hugh Merrick)

IT WAS the intention of the Austrian Himalaya Club to mount an expedition to Hidden Peak, but the Pakistan Government would not give permission for an attempt on that objective or any of the alternatives suggested by the Club. They did, however, grant a permit for an attempt on Haramosh (24,270 ft.), a mountain we had not considered in advance. Moreover, there was not much information about it in the available literature of the Himalaya ; so we had to get in touch with the leaders of the expeditions which had been active in the area in 1947 and 1955. These were the Swiss, Gyr and Kappeler, and the German party led by Reinhard Sander. They readily provided us with important information, which served us in good stead later on and for which we were most grateful.

Our team included three scientists, Professors Konrad Wiche and Karl Jettmar, and Dr. E. Piffl, and five climbers, among whom was the expedition's doctor. These were Heinrich Roiss, the leader of the expedition, Dr. Franx Mandl, Rudolf Ebner, Stefan Pauer, and our medico, Dr. Rudolf Hammerschlag. In the field of science Wiche's assignment was geographical, Jettmar's ethnological, and Piffl's zoological. Their work lay in the valleys of Gilgit and Haramosh, Tangir, Darel and Swat, and these three members of the University of Vienna only went with us as far as Iskere. Their work proved very repaying and resulted in the publication of several scientific reports, with more yet to follow.

We spent about five months in preparations, basing them on our own experience and that of many other Himalayan expeditions. We relied primarily for the necessary capital funds on grants from public sources, but these were supplemented by private subscriptions. The whole of our equipment and commissariat was supplied and paid for by firms, mostly Austrian, but to some extent from other countries. Our baggage weighed four and a half tons in all, of which 65 per cent was commissariat, the rest equipment.

Our team of eight left on March 28, 1958, embarking at Genoa on the 30th and arriving at Karachi on April 11. On the 14th we proceeded by train to Rawalpindi, arriving on the 16th. On the outward journey we flew from Rawalpindi to Gilgit, the flight on the 19th being uneventful. On the return journey we covered this stage non-stop in forty-eight hours by jeep, a most exciting experience. Our route was

along the Gilgit river to its junction with the Indus, then down the Indus across the Rakhiot bridge through the Babusar nullah and then over the 13,780 ft. Babusar Pass, along the Kagan Valley and to Rawalpindi by way of Naran, Balakot and Abbotabad.

We stayed six days at Gilgit, waiting for the porters I had ordered from Hunza to arrive. About ten men turned up and we selected six of them, gave them their clothing and explained their duties to them. I should mention at once that we were not at all satisfied with these high-altitude porters. They were work-shy, continually resisted any orders they found unpalatable and were often very careless about other people's property. For instance, before we ever got away from Gilgit they sold the major part of their equipment, although it was laid down that it was only to be theirs after the completion of the expedition, as the fundamental condition for their work on the mountain.

We learned at Gilgit that part of our approach route could be covered by jeep. Thanks entirely to the assistance of the Political Officer, we were able to hire four vehicles. Owing to the large amount of equipment we had to cover this stage twice over. Even this short journey by jeep was an exciting experience, for it was not only the jeeps themselves but the roads, which had been heavily damaged by long periods of rain, which conspired to produce every variety of excitement. All the same, this method of progress brought us nearer to our objective in shorter time, and with less bother, than if we had tackled this stage of forty-five miles to Sassli with porters, which would have taken at the very least three days. Briefly, our route lay down the Gilgit river to the Allan bridge—a few miles short of its entry into the Indus—where we crossed the Gilgit and then followed the right bank of the Indus upstream. We passed through Hanutschal and reached Sassli, which stands at about 4,920 ft.

There we had to engage porters, which proved no easy matter, since the villages hereabouts are sparsely inhabited, and we needed 150 men for our 150 loads. Through the efforts of our Liaison Officer, Jameel ur Rahman, who had been attached to us at Gilgit, we finally succeeded in mustering 125 men and 14 donkeys from the whole area. The Liaison Officer proved himself indispensable throughout the expedition and his assistance was quite invaluable.

We left Sassli on the 27th and marched up the Haramosh nullah, which falls into the Indus valley. Passing through Tasso and Bartsche, we reached Iskere, one of the last habitations occupied during the summer, on the 28th. These places are only occupied by the villagers of Tasso and Sassli during the summer months because the high alps offer better pasturage than the meadows in the valleys below. We found pastures of this type up to nearly 10,000 ft. and another unusual feature of the Haramosh nullah is its luxuriant vegetation, particularly

its wonderful pine and birch forests, which only begin at about 8,000 ft., its lower reaches being almost bare.

For various reasons we shall always have the liveliest memories of Iskere, where we had a very unpleasant experience. For here, as elsewhere, our expedition attracted a great deal of interest. Unfortunately, to add to everything, the Dayal of Iskere, the witch-doctor of the valley, decided to vent his spite on us. He interfered with our project, to which his attitude was unfriendly, and during one of his spirit sessions declared in a trance that the demons and spirits of Haramosh were angry at our intentions, had laid a curse on us and that two Sahibs and three Hunzas would die as a result. Moreover, every porter who assisted us would be pursued by demons ever after. We paid little heed to his dark predictions, though we knew how strong superstition is in these regions; but we were very soon to learn the practical effects on our undertaking, owing to the strong fear of demons under which our porters live. Not a single local inhabitant would carry for us; and even our Hunzas were so impressed by these oracular predictions that they began to raise every kind of difficulty. Finally, they all wanted to go home. We began by influencing the Hunzas by talking sensibly to them; later, with the assistance of the Lambadar, we collected a few porters. But they were far too few and we had to cover the next stage in a series of relays as a result.

Above Iskere we reached the Mani glacier, which we crossed to reach its true right bank near Kutwal Sar, an entrancing spot in the woods, where we established our 'Forest Camp'. Our intention had been to push on to the far end of the Haramosh nullah and site our Base Camp there, but our plans were disrupted by the unwillingness of the porters to go any further. Moreover, there was still a great deal of winter snow up here. Base Camp was consequently not established till May 16. It took us and the Hunzas a fortnight's work to carry our loads up from the Forest Camp, a distance of about three hours only.

We sited our Base Camp at 11,155 ft. at the foot of the slope rising to the Haramosh La, on which, at a height of 15,748 ft. we planned to place Camp I. But first we had to find a safe route up to the pass, for avalanches kept on roaring across the slope. We had to move mostly by night, because the danger increased greatly after sunrise. Indeed, we had already had to cope with avalanches at Forest Camp; our tents were often roughly handled by the blast from avalanches which thundered down the 13,000 ft. North face of Haramosh. On one occasion it took us two days to repair the damage and salvage our equipment from all points of the compass.

We only succeeded once in getting the Hunzas up to the Haramosh La. They were terrified of the avalanches, and when our doctor had the misfortune to fall about 100 ft. and break some ribs, their fear of



Photo, Österr. Himalaya-Gesellschaft]

HARAMOSH AND MANI PEAKS

ROUTE OF ASCENT — — — — —

BC	= BASE CAMP, 11,155 FEET	L4	= CAMP FOUR, 20,342 FEET
L1	= CAMP ONE, 15,748 FEET	MII	= MANI PEAK II, 20,670 FEET
L2	= CAMP TWO, 18,373 FEET	MIV	= MANI PEAK IV, 21,162 FEET
L3	= CAMP THREE, 20,342 FEET	H	= HARAMOSH, 24,270 FEET

the demons quite destroyed their morale. Every time an avalanche fell, they believed the witch-doctor's prophecies were coming true ; but in spite of their very poor performance we were not minded to dispense entirely with their services. They were well aware of this and behaved so intractably that we finally had to let them go. They started their tricks with the Liaison Officer, who was always trying to keep them at their duties. They threatened him, eventually so violently that we seriously feared for 'Jimmy's' life and had to mount guard over his tent at night. We knew that we could raise no new recruits locally—the Dayal had seen to that—so I sent Mandl and the Liaison Officer down to Gilgit to see what they could do there. In the meantime we had to do without porters for a longish time, and this was a serious set-back.

We were none the less able occasionally to engage a few porters from Kutwal Sar, into which the villagers had by now moved up ; but half way to the pass they always turned tail. We had to take this into account, so we sited a transit-camp at 13,780 ft., in order not to idle away our time altogether. We had a stroke of bad luck about this time, when an avalanche swept away eleven loads. I also suffered some damage, dislocating my shoulder and, like Hammerschlag, I was out of action for a while. We managed to salvage some of the loads, but not till two weeks later. Unfortunately, they contained our supply of cigarettes and I, who am a smoker, suffered more from that loss than I did from my injuries. The position was not at all encouraging. We had no high-altitude porters, two of us were not entirely fit, we had lost some essential loads, and we had already lost a month of valuable time—we were to realise later on how valuable.

Whenever we could we cheerfully dragged loads up to the Haramosh La. Hammerschlag and I carried up to the transit-camp, Pauer and Ebner onwards to Camp I. We had to tackle that 4,600 ft. grind forty times in all. In order to avoid probable pilferage we left nothing down at Base Camp. At long last, on June 8, Mandl and Jimmy appeared with six new Hunzas, of whom we had to send back one after three days, by which time he had shown himself utterly useless.

Mandl and I were able to occupy Camp I on the Haramosh La on June 15. The gales were so fierce that we did not pitch tents, but dug ourselves into the ice. We were later very satisfied with our experience of ice-caves, finding them the best protection from storms ; and we grew so accustomed to their steady temperature of -4° C., that we worked without our pull-overs. The only thing which refused to co-operate was our overworked typewriter ; the best way to use it was on one's knees with a petrol-cooker hissing between one's feet.

At first, bad weather prevented our pushing on to our intended Camp II ; so we kept ourselves busy with the complete transfer of

loads to Camp I. It was finished by the end of June, when the whole team was assembled there.

On June 23, Mandl, Dr. Hammerschlag and I reconnoitred the route towards Camp II at the foot of Mani Peak. We took a line up the centre of the ice-fall, which shuts off the upper basin of the Haramosh glacier and bars the way to Mani Peak. We made good progress up the ice-fall, but it was not an ideal route, being too difficult for heavily-laden porters. The following day, Mandl, Jimmy and I succeeded in finding a more accessible route through the labyrinth of crevasses, and marked it with marker-pennants. We reached the foot of Mani Peak for the first time on June 25, and pressed on for some hundreds of feet up its north slope till we got a footing on its East ridge at about 19,000 ft. It was however not a suitable place for a camp, so we went down about 660 ft. and picked a site for Camp II in a small hollow there.

The next few days were occupied with the transport of loads to Camp II. In order to ease the work, we tried to shift them on a sledge built of skis and packing-cases, but dragging the sledge proved far too exhausting, and we went back to the normal method of humping them on our backs. Camp II was once again an ice-cave camp, as a safeguard against avalanches.

Dr. Hammerschlag and Pauer moved in on July 5. Their job was to reconnoitre the route to Camp III. Next day Ebner and Mandl moved up to reinforce them. Together, they pushed on up the East ridge to 19,700 ft. at the foot of the summit slope of Mani Peak II. (Mani Peak is a subsidiary summit of Haramosh and we gave it that name. It is a massif with four distinct summits, which has to be traversed if you want to get to the top of Haramosh.)

Jimmy and I followed up to Camp II on July 7, but he had to give up quite soon owing to the altitude. At the same time, the Hunzas played up so much that they were no real help to us. Pauer and Ebner were also feeling the altitude.

On July 9, Mandl, Hammerschlag and I climbed to the summit of Mani Peak I (20,342 ft.) but had to concede that we could not reach the gap between it and the other three Mani summits; there was no way of getting there without traversing Mani II with its repellent-looking 660 ft. summit precipice. To reduce this task somewhat, we pitched a tent next day at the foot of the ice-slope, so as to save ourselves the slog up from Camp II and to conserve our energies for the attack on the ice-wall itself. Mandl and I occupied this 'Ice-wall' camp and in the course of four days of exceedingly difficult ice-work, supplemented at places by complicated overhead rope manœuvres, mastered the wall with double-rope and piton technique, fixed 660 ft. of rope on it and then, with the help of our team-mates hauled rucksack after rucksack up on the free rope. This was strength-sapping work,

each rucksack taking on an average half an hour. On the summit of Mani II (20,670 ft.) we dumped a temporary depot, which Mandl and I later shifted into the gap between the Mani Peaks, where Camp III was established at 20,342 ft.

Mandl and I occupied it on July 15 ; Pauer and Ebner were ill again and had to go down. Dr. Hammerschlag, who was also not quite fit, insisted on our having a doctor within reach and remained at ' Ice-wall ' camp. Mandl and I decided to use the evening hours by climbing Mani IV, so as to get a sight of the continuation of the ridge to Haramosh. We knew it must be fully $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, but had no idea of its formation. At a little before 8 p.m. we were on the summit and enjoyed a marvellous sunset, which banished all our weariness. But what we could see of our route ahead was by no means encouraging. The corniced ridge went swinging away towards Haramosh for mile upon mile, with numerous steps down and then up again in its course. We agreed that to reach the summit of Haramosh and return to this point would require at least three days. So far as we could judge, there was no possibility of establishing a fourth camp to make that long traverse any easier. Wonderful as was that evening hour on Mani Peak IV, with all the Baltoro peaks, so familiar from 1956, glowing in the sun's last rays—K2, Broad Peak, our own Gasherbrum II, Hidden Peak, Chogolisa, where Hermann Buhl perished, all seemingly near enough to touch—we knew that all this beauty boded no good, could only presage a change in the weather. We looked out towards the south and saw Nanga Parbat soaring like a fortress above a sea of lesser peaks; northwards, Rakaposhi's sharp peak soared like a church spire into the sky. It was lovely enough, but the bitter cold roused us from our dreams and we hurried back to Camp III with chattering teeth.

Back in our sleeping bags we busied ourselves with our plans to push on for the summit of Haramosh next day ; our hopes and fears rested on the weather. In the early hours we were torn from sleep by the rattling of our tent in the gale ; tatters of cloud drove across us on the wings of the wind and, like a wall, a huge bank of yellow cloud bore up on us from the south. The weather had broken. We did our best to anchor the tent and crawled back into our sleeping-bags, hoping against hope that this turmoil might be of short duration.

But after two days, as the weather was getting worse and worse, without any sign of letting up, we decided to climb down. If we stayed, we would only be purposelessly consuming the provisions which it had cost us so much labour to bring up. Through a terrible storm we fought our way up to Mani II, only to find the ropes we had fixed to the ice-wall, to safeguard our return, completely snowed under. With indescribable effort we uncovered them foot by foot and battled our way down, playthings of the gale which flung us hither and thither at

its will. Our gauntlets were bundles of rags before we stood exhausted three hours later at the foot of the ice-wall. The tent there was completely snowed under, with only its apex showing. Hammerschlag had gone down. Luckily, we found spare gloves, or we could never have escaped frost-bitten hands. We waded, thigh-deep in snow, down to Camp II, fearful that we would be carried away at any moment by an avalanche. Our guardian angels were most certainly at our shoulders then. There was no sign of Camp II at the place where it should have been. We had no will to dig down into the unknown, nor had we the tools for it. So we climbed on down, to reach Camp I on the Haramosh La during the afternoon, utterly worn out. All our team-mates were there, safe and sound.

Here, too, the weather had imposed difficulties. We had to save the tents from collapse—not only our own but the porters’—for they did nothing but grizzle and pray for Allah’s protection. Our hope that this might be only a short break in the weather did not last long. Radio Pakistan’s special weather report, issued for our benefit, informed us that the monsoon had set in prematurely. Our chief activity was now to listen in to every available weather station in Asia; for we could not give up hope. There must surely be a break in this inferno some time, and we intended, when it came, to use it. There was little time left, but we were determined to risk everything rather than go back home without having climbed our peak.

We spent miserable days sitting in Camp I, till, finally, on July 27, a gleam of hope was lit for us. Radio India informed us of a lessening in the monsoon storms and we reckoned that this would affect us in a few days’ time. In fact, it cleared up during the afternoon of July 31 and by evening we could see Haramosh in all the glory of a dress of fresh snow. Our will and our morale suddenly sprang to new life. During the evening Radio India informed us that a new wave of monsoon storms was on the way. We knew now that the period of fine weather would last at the most three or four days; none the less, we decided to make our second attempt on Haramosh next day. We also knew, before we started, that the time we probably had at our disposal would at the best be sufficient for us to get to the summit. What about getting back . . . ?

At 3 a.m. on August 1 the whole party left Camp I. All the Hunzas had to come too, for we needed every man. The ascent to Camp II took almost three times as long as usual; we simply wallowed our way forward through the snow. When at last we reached the camp site, we had to locate the tents with 16 ft. probes. The nerve-racking game went on for hours, but we found them in the end; then it took hours to dig them out. Our caves had filled up in the meantime and could not be used. We did not feel like making new ones, so we salvaged

our equipment and put up tents in which we spent the night. This exhausting work brought on attacks of altitude sickness and Jimmy and two Hunzas had to go back to Camp I.

On August 2 we started off again very early and ploughed our way up the East ridge to 'Ice-wall' Camp at the foot of Mani II's ice-cliff. Here again we spent hours searching for the tent. When the three Hunzas who had come up with us saw the ice-wall they contracted altitude sickness too, and we sent them packing. They were in any case no help to us any more. Our next task was to clear the fixed ropes and rope nine loads up the ice-slope. Then we traversed to Mani II and reached the hollow, where once again we had to probe around to find Camp III and then dig out the tents which were covered by fully ten feet of snow.

While we were at this work, Ebner and Hammerschlag began to complain of headaches, and the first symptoms of mountain sickness were soon apparent. Pauer also was not feeling too well. The day's exertions had in fact been tremendous; we had been hard at work from 3 a.m. until late into the evening hours. However, we dared not treat ourselves to a rest day. Time was short; the monsoon on our heels. We could only hope that our companions would feel a little better by the morning—a hope in which we were disappointed.

When we crawled out of the tents at dawn on the 3rd, only Mandl reported fit to start with Pauer and me. Ebner was very sick, but Hammerschlag, though not in a fit state to accompany us, felt strong enough to break a trail up to the top of Mani IV. We had to cart everything for a three days' effort with us—a tent, three sleeping-bags, petrol-stove, petrol, utensils, a change of clothes, food, two ropes, pitons, camera equipment. In spite of the greatest economy, it meant three enormous packs, far too heavy for a ridge $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles long, but what could we do? Sadly we said 'good-bye' to Ebner; we had all hoped it might be possible for every one of us to stand on the summit. He, too, was heartbroken to see us go.

Panting heavily under the weight of our packs, we reached the summit of Mani Peak IV at about half-past seven. Here Hammerschlag left us and we took a short breather. We were already exhausted from humping such packs. How would we fare later on? All around us the peaks gleamed and glittered in the sunshine, but today we had hardly a glance to spare for them. We kept on looking questioningly and in doubt across to that seemingly endless ridge, to the 'Mouse-trap' as we called it, for the 2,300 ft. of height we had to lose at this point in the ridge would exact the last ounce from us on our return journey.

There were no difficulties for the first few rope-lengths; but the ridge, crowned as it was with cornices several feet high, demanded the

greatest caution. We got down several short pitches on the double rope. The first serious obstacle was a rock-finger, which we called 'The little Moor's Head', but we soon got over it, though I slipped into a crevasse at the foot of the rocks, split my rucksack, and its contents went rolling all over the place. After a great deal of up-and-down work we came to a col at 19,357 ft. There was a nose of rock in front of us which it was impossible to climb with the packs we were carrying. We managed to turn it, and several subsequent obstacles, mostly by the North flank. We had to climb a snow dome at about 20,340 ft., and called it 'Caprice Peak' (Zufallspitze), because we were on top before we discovered that we could have turned it on its southern side. After crossing another snow crest, we rested on a big col at 19,685 ft. It was already late in the afternoon; long hours of great exertion and the sun's scorching rays had taken their toll. We were terribly tired.

Mani IV, which we had left that morning, was barely recognisable in the far distance. But, far as we had come, the way before us still looked appallingly long. With our heavy packs, we had not the will to go any further and we decided to climb down for a few feet to look for a sheltered hollow in which to site Camp IV. There we spent the evening hours lying in our sleeping-bags, drinking quantities of tea and fruit-juice. We were too exhausted to eat anything. Owing to breathing through our mouths our dehydrated throats ached. There was no question of sleeping; we were too tense and our fears about the weather forbade it. So we lay awake through the hours of darkness, and a few minutes after midnight we decided to move off again. We softened our boots, which were as hard as boards, over candles.

At about 1 a.m. we left the tent, our teeth rattling with the cold. We had established on the previous day that the ridge could be reached further along. So we decided to traverse along a trough to the summit structure of Haramosh. This manœuvre lost us some 660 ft. of height, but we felt it would be easier than along the crest of the ridge in the darkness. The lowest point in the trough was at about 19,030 ft.; from it the route led through a maze of ice-falls to the foot of Haramosh's East ridge. At about 4.30 a.m., as the sun came up, we gained a lodgement on it at about 20,670 ft. The sunrise was absolutely glorious. Every peak around us seemed to be on fire; but that yellow wall, fearsomely beautiful but presaging evil, was looming up again from the south. We knew that destruction came from that direction.

We drove one another on, but uselessly. The quicker we climbed, the more plainly did weariness and the thin air affect us. We had to stop more and more often to rest. At the end of five hours' steep climbing we were on the Shoulder of Haramosh (22,638 ft.). It was about 9.30 a.m. and we allowed ourselves a rather longer halt. The

peaks all around us were by now wrapped in cloud ; only Haramosh rose above the wrack in front of us. The level stretch over the Shoulder brought us no relief, for we broke through friable crust up to our knees along it. Indeed, we were glad when the ridge steepened, offering us firmer snow. We were only a few hundred feet from the summit now. The huge snow-bulge, a giant cornice just below the top, which we had christened the ' Whipped Cream Roll ', grew bigger and bigger. It was terribly steep, but we found we could by-pass it to the south. We had to take off our crampons once or twice, owing to variations in the snow conditions. The higher we went, the more furiously the storm raged about us and the thin air snatched our breath from us even without the assistance of the gale. So furious was the blast that at times we were unable to remain upright, for fear of being swept away over the edge of the ridge. We crawled forward, gaining height foot by foot. The worst moment was when we had to take to the south side of the ridge on reaching the ice-bulge ; for there we were mercilessly exposed to the storm without any protection whatever. After every five or six steps, the leading man fell down and lay there while the next took up the lead, crawling forward a few yards, to give way to number three. The process repeated itself endlessly till we had put the obstacle behind us and found ourselves only a few yards from the summit. We stumbled and staggered, rather than walked, along the knife-edged blade of a ridge which led up to it. At long last, at about 2 p.m., thirteen hours after setting out from Camp IV, we were on the summit of Haramosh. We were much too weary to enjoy that moment, to which we had so long been looking forward. We cowered down on the summit, which is no bigger than a table, and our only thought was rest and recuperation. The scene all around us was terrifying ; everything was shrouded in blackish-yellow cloud. We recognised and accepted the danger involved, in an apathetic kind of way.

It was quite a time before we even shook hands. You must believe me when I say that this was one of the greatest moments of my life. We fixed the Pakistani and Austrian pennants to an axe and left a small wooden cross in memory of the two British climbers who died on the mountain in 1957. We sealed the record and date of our first ascent in a small tin container. Our ' summit hour ' was severely curtailed by the storm and the bitter cold, and we prepared to go down after only a quarter of an hour. We just managed to take some pictures before the clouds were down and all around us ; in another minute or two it would have been too late.

So fierce was the gale that the Austrian pennant was torn from the axe and was blown away into the abyss to the south. That was our tribute to the demons ! In spite of all the available obstacles they had so far set in our path, we had persisted ; we had pressed on for a short

time into their realm and had even spent a few minutes on their throne. We were only too glad to cede it to them. All we wanted was to get down again to warmth and life.

We knew that the descent and the long traverse of the ridge to Mani Peak would develop into a fight for our very lives. For the first part of the descent we were still able to recognise our ascending track, but later on it had been obliterated. We stumbled on down through a monotony of greyness. The gale whipped the ice crystals into our faces, though we felt nothing. The only sensation left to us was the concentrated power of our will to get down.

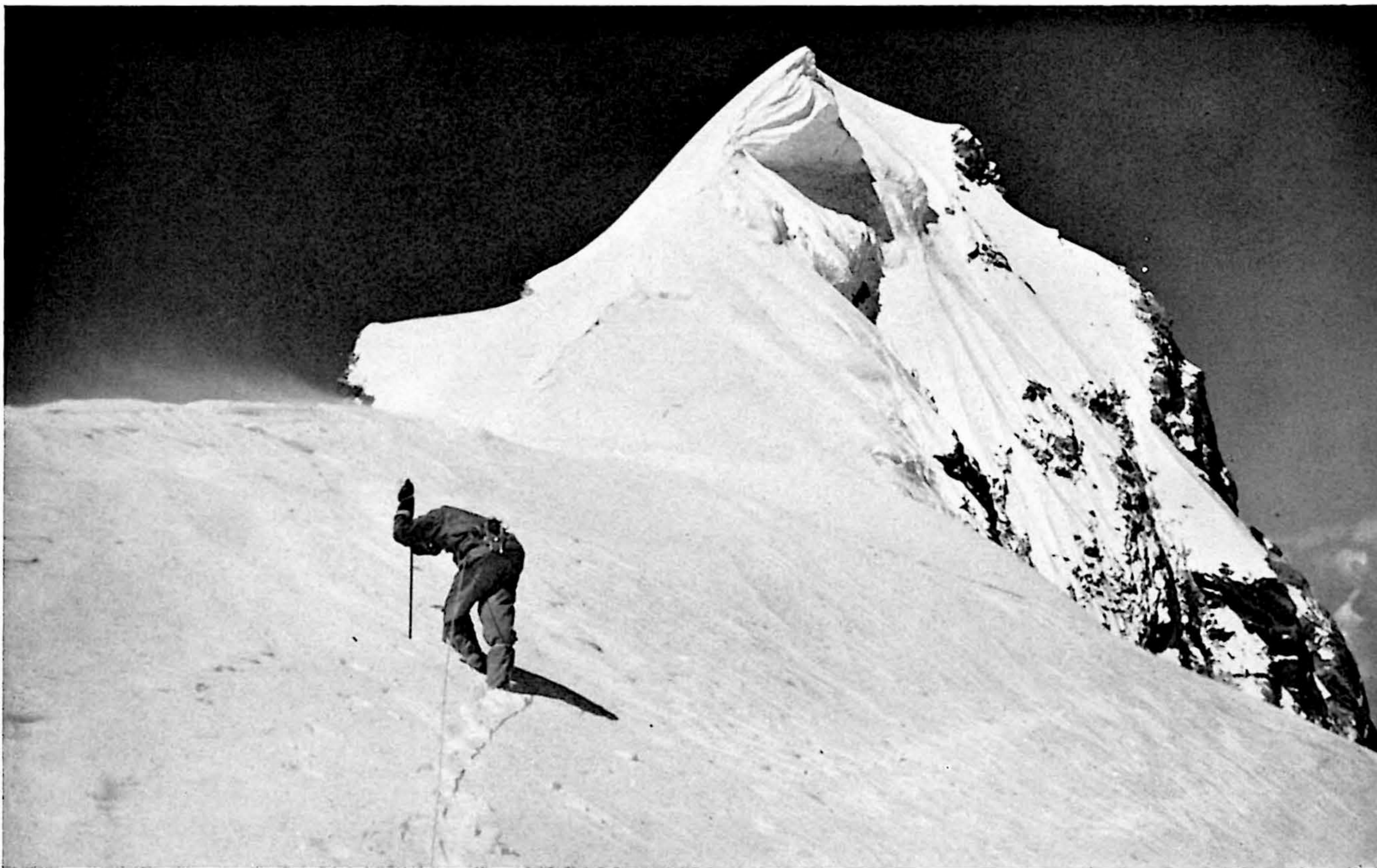
We crossed the Shoulder and reached the lower section of the East ridge, then on and on down it to the great hollow. Though it was still only afternoon, the flying snow and cloud wrack was so thick that we were moving in darkness. The most dangerous sector now lay behind us. We had been incredibly lucky not to have been swept away over one or other of the slopes plunging thousands of feet away on either side.

We struggled on through the ice-falls in the hollow till we reached the lowest point in the route, the 19,030 ft. col. We now had 660 ghastly feet to climb before reaching our tent. We could no longer stand up. We crawled slowly upwards, on all fours or on our bellies; every now and then we just lay there for a few minutes to rest. We were twenty, then only ten yards, from the tent, but it did not seem possible to reach it. It was two hours before, at 8 p.m., we crawled over its threshold, and lay there utterly spent. Our throats were so painful and swollen that we could not speak. We spent half the night preparing and swallowing tea and fruit-juice. We could not even think of sleep. The screaming gale, our weariness and the thought of the day to come kept us wide awake.

We crawled out of our sleeping-bags very early, packed the bare necessities, and left the tent, the cooker and part of the provisions behind. Our rucksacks were still far too heavy. It was not too bad, going up the few feet to the crest of the ridge, but once there the gale had us in its unremitting grip. We had to force our way against it with the whole of our bodily might, so as not to be bowled over by it. We went on like that for hour after hour, till we could hardly move any more. But whenever one of us stopped and lay down, the others dragged him along again.

We crossed Caprice Peak and got back to the 19,357 ft. col. We knew then that about 1,800 ft. of uphill grind lay between us and possible survival. Endless hours ran out. Beyond all sensation, we no longer noticed the cold or our own weariness. How to go on was our only thought.

We now had to face the far more exacting difficulties of actually



Photo, Österr. Himalaya—Gesellschaft]

ON THE SHOULDER OF HARAMOSH, CIRCA 22,650 FT.

climbing the many pitches down which we had roped coming the other way. Only the will to live kept us on our feet.

Late in the afternoon we crawled up the last few feet of Mani Peak IV and lay there gasping. With hope renewed we looked down towards Camp III, but failed to identify it. We tottered and fell down into the hollow. We tried shouting, but not a sound would pass our lips. We still hoped our companions would come to our assistance ; but when at last we struggled through to the camp we suffered a crippling disappointment—it was empty. We did not know then that Ebner and Hammerschlag had hurried down as quickly as possible, desperately ill. We did not even trouble to clear the snow out of the tent ; we just crawled in and lay there like dead men.

Once again sleep was hardly to be thought of ; we were too utterly exhausted. We would gladly have taken a rest day, but we knew that with the masses of fresh snow which continued to fall, it would become more and more difficult and dangerous to get down the slopes of Mani Peak. So we decided to start off again at once. We meant to take as much baggage as possible down with us, for who could tell if we would ever get up here again ? Each of us grabbed what he could and started off with one pack on his back and another on his chest. It took us more than an hour to climb the 330 ft. up to Mani II. The descent of the fixed ropes on the ice-cliff with those rucksacks was sheer torture. I went swinging down with one pack on my back and the other hanging on a snap-link on the rope in front of me. The gale kept on banging me against the ice-wall and the rucksack several times hit me in the face ; my nose bled and the blood ran down my beard, my gauntlets were in shreds and I had lost all sensation in my hands. I hung on to the rope with my strength ebbing every minute, but it was of no avail over the last few feet—I simply lost my grip and slid down the rope like a sack, fortunately landing in deep snow. The others fared no better. Our exertions had been beyond human capacity. We had been hanging there on the ice-wall, exposed to the fury of the storm for more than three hours.

At the foot of the wall Mandl and I abandoned one pack, Pauer both of his ; he even parted with his camera, a thing which had never happened before. As we could see nothing of the tent at ' Ice-wall ' camp, there was nothing for it but to push on to Camp II. By a stroke of luck, the storm from time to time blew the mists apart, so that we were able to take bearings. Several hours later we reached Camp II, but our hopes of finding one of our team-mates there were once again dissipated. Since we had no longer the strength to rootle out the tents which were deeply snowed in, we decided to go on down to Camp I, as the first point offering us the hope of safety.

Yard by yard we staggered on down. At last, in the evening hours,

we reached the hollow of the Haramosh La. So dense was the blizzard that we could not locate the tents, and for a while were afraid that we might have to bivouac only a few yards from cover and shelter. We rushed around in circles, continually coming again on our own trail. Had we been able to shout it would have been useless ; no one could have heard us against the howling of the storm. In our pitiful condition, soaked through and spent as we were, a night in the open must have had fearsome consequences. Just as the last daylight was fading, we had an incredible stroke of luck ; for a few seconds visibility improved and we recognised a rock gendarme near the Haramosh La. A few minutes later we were safely in the tents of Camp I and the arms of our team-mates.

It was not till that moment, which at long last meant our restoration to life, that the joy of our success on the mountain surged to the surface.

The storm did not let up for three whole days. On the fourth day, August 9, Hammerschlag, Ebner and the Hunzas went up to evacuate the high camps. They managed to salvage part of the loads, but could not bring them down the mountain. Indeed, they were glad enough to get away safely without the loads.

On August 14 Mandl and the Liaison Officer went down to Kutwal Sar to mobilise porters. On the 18th we pushed up to the high camps again and were lucky enough to be able to rescue some of the loads. The 21st saw us all reunited at Kutwal Sar.

We recuperated for two days in that veritable paradise of beauty, then moved down to Sassli on the 23rd. On the 25th we ferried our baggage to Gilgit by jeep. We were back in Rawalpindi on the 31st. We joined up with the scientists at Karachi and arrived back in Vienna on September 23.