

THE GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN HINDU KUSH EXPEDITION, 1963

BY IRIS TRÜBSWETTER

(*Five illustrations: nos. 66-70*)

IN the northern Hindu Kush there are two valleys, the Darrah-i-Sakhi and the Darrah-i-Iblar, which unite at Du-Ab and flow into the Munjan at Keran. At the end of both valleys are large glaciers. The surrounding mountains descend in almost vertical ice-walls to the Munjan Pass in the east.

The Darrah-i-Sakhi and the Darrah-i-Iblar are wide valleys like a U, where the glaciers come down to 4,500 m. Under huge masses of stones and gravel, ice is still found at an altitude of 4,200 m. A wonderful lake, the Hauz-i-Iblar, bars the Darrah-i-Iblar half way up the valley. Up to this lake the dividing mountain range between the two valleys and the Kokcha is called Koh-e-Ghas, eight bizarre, steep ice-covered mountains about 5,100 to 5,300 m. in height. All mountains farther up the Iblar valley are called Koh-e-Kâ, meaning 'mountains of straw'. The mountain joining both ranges is the Koh-e-Kâ Laghn. On its sides huge amounts of lapis lazuli are found and on its western slope is the government lapis lazuli mine. The Koh-e-Kâ reaches a height of 6,000 m.

There is a low range, about 5,000 m., between the Darrah-i-Iblar and the Darrah-i-Sakhi, called Koh-e-Iblar. It can be crossed by a pass between the pastures of Ghas in the Iblar valley and those of Remr in the Sakhi valley.

The Darrah-i-Sakhi is flanked by five ice giants in the east. They are called Koh-e-Bandakâ¹ and rise to 6,500 m., a height which is not reached by any other mountain in the Central Hindu Kush.

In 1960 a group of four Berlin alpinists (Hasse, Hansemann, Heine and Winkler) came over the Anjuman Pass and saw in the distance the huge, snow-covered Bandakâ. Until then it had not been known that there were any mountains in this part of the Hindu Kush. On the maps this was a great valley. Of course the four Berliners at once decided to climb this mountain and after many difficulties and hardships managed to reach the main summit. After a fortnight they left the Sakhi valley and turned to the Pagar valley, a tributary of the Anjuman, where they climbed several 5,000-ers. They had only climbed the highest summit of the immense range of the Bandakâ and left the rest to their successors.

In April, 1963, the Garmisch-Partenkirchen Hindu Kush Expedition

¹ This spelling is preferred to Bandakor.

set out to complete what the Berliners had begun.² The leader was Thomas Trübswetter, *Diplom-Holzwirt*; the 'medicine man' (as they called him) was Dr. Volkert Gazert. Then there were also Konrad Holch, physicist, Christian Speer, tool-maker, and Iris Trübswetter, wife of the leader and maid-of-all-work.

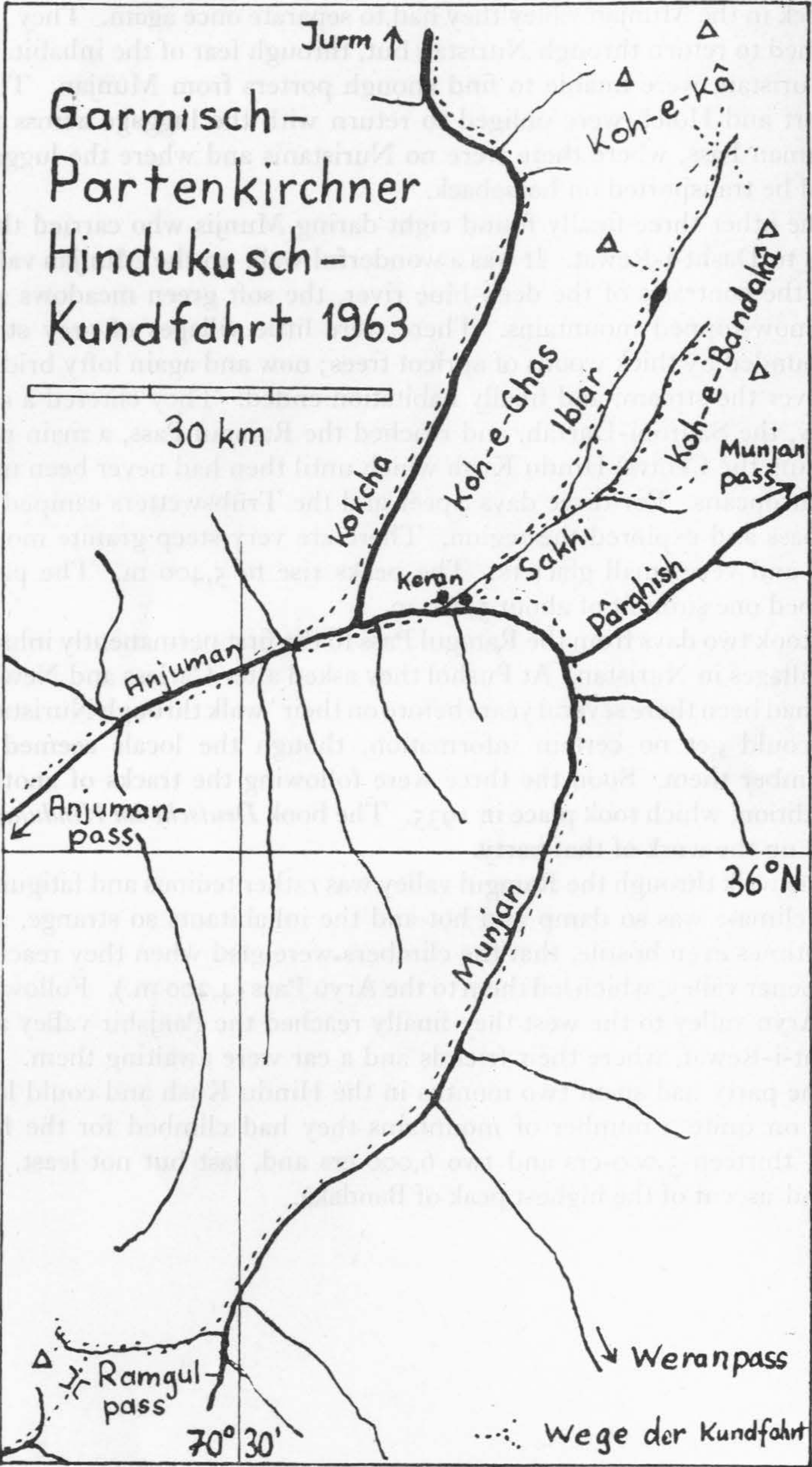
After a six weeks' journey they reached Kabul by car and here they had to fight ministers and 'kabulitis': ministers, because they did not want to give permission for the proposed route, and 'kabulitis' because lying in bed and being ill is not the way to start an expedition. Having overcome these troubles they set out for the mountains; first on a lorry to Jurm, then with twenty donkeys up the Kokcha to Keran and from there with horses to the Iblar lake, where porters had to take over the loads. At 4,100 m. they had a pleasant Base Camp in a green meadow, and then a further camp was erected right at the end of the valley. After ten days all the surrounding mountains had been climbed, all of them from 5,000 m. to 6,000 m. in height. They were all rather difficult to ascend, and it was never possible for one group to reach two summits on one day. These twelve mountains were not only aims in themselves but were very useful for training purposes. The climbers then crossed to the Sakhi valley, to the Bandakâ.

On July 16 the party divided. Thomas Trübswetter and Holch wanted to climb the two highest summits while Gazert, Speer and Iris Trübswetter attacked the next one. On the first day Trübswetter and Holch reach the camp of the Berliners at 5,400 m. on the West ridge. On the following day they arrived at noon on the highest summit (second ascent) of Bandakâ; their aneroid indicated a height of 6,500 m. Crossing a glacier basin they then made the first ascent of the Northern summit which is 100 m. lower. Without a bivouac they managed to return to their camp before nightfall and got back to Base Camp next day.

Meanwhile the other three followed the Sakhi valley to its head. On a broad glacier they erected their little tent at the foot of the third 6,000-er. Over ice and rocks they reached the top of Koh-e-Bandakâ-Sakhi, 6,200 m., at 2 p.m. They saw two little points moving on the Northern summit of the Bandakâ; what a coincidence! They waved, but soon the two vanished in a cloud. Just before nightfall the second party also reached their camp.

Several attempts were made to climb the remaining Bandakâ mountains, which are also about 6,000 m. in height. But the weather turned bad and the party finally left the valley. Perhaps another group will complete what they left unfinished. The valleys leading to these two mountains and the best way to the summits have now been explored by this German group and so these peaks could only be a secondary aim for any future Hindu Kush expedition.

² This was the sixth German Hindu Kush expedition since 1959.



ROUTE OF THE GARMISCH-PARTENKIRCHEN HINDU KUSH EXPEDITION
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Back in the Munjan valley they had to separate once again. They had planned to return through Nuristan but, through fear of the inhabitants of Nuristan, were unable to find enough porters from Munjan. Thus Gazert and Holch were obliged to return with the luggage across the Anjuman Pass, where there were no Nuristanis and where the luggage could be transported on horseback.

The other three finally found eight daring Munjis who carried their loads to Dasht-i-Rewat. It was a wonderful walk up the Munjan valley with the contrasts of the deep-blue river, the soft green meadows and the snow-topped mountains. There were little villages of grey stone surrounded by thick woods of apricot trees; now and again lofty bridges led over the stream, and finally habitation ended. They entered a side valley, the Sauroni-Darrah, and reached the Ramgul Pass, a main pass crossing the Central Hindu Kush which until then had never been used by Europeans. For three days Speer and the Trübswetters camped on the pass and explored the region. There are very steep granite mountains and very small glaciers. The peaks rise to 5,400 m. The party climbed one summit of about 5,200 m.

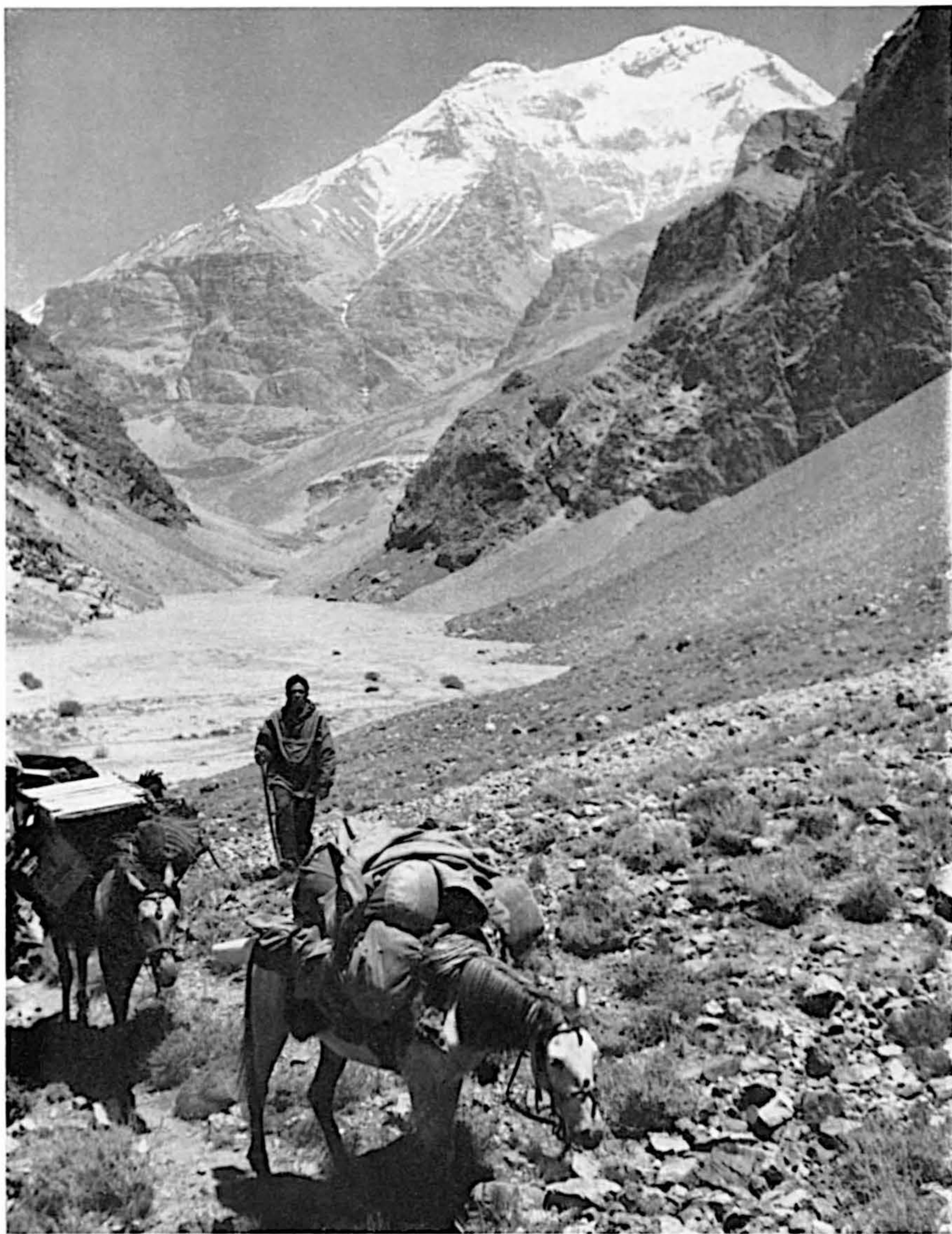
It took two days from the Ramgul Pass to the first permanently inhabited villages in Nuristan. At Pushol they asked after Carless and Newby, who had been there several years before on their 'walk through Nuristan', but could get no certain information, though the locals seemed to remember them. Soon the three were following the tracks of another expedition, which took place in 1935. The book *Deutsche im Hindukusch* sums up the work of that party.

The walk through the Ramgul valley was rather tedious and fatiguing. The climate was so damp and hot and the inhabitants so strange, and sometimes even hostile, that the climbers were glad when they reached the Lenar valley, which led them to the Aryu Pass (4,200 m.). Following the Aryu valley to the west they finally reached the Panjshir valley and Dasht-i-Rewat, where their friends and a car were awaiting them.

The party had spent two months in the Hindu Kush and could look back on quite a number of mountains they had climbed for the first time, thirteen 5,000-ers and two 6,000-ers and, last but not least, the second ascent of the highest peak of Bandakâ.



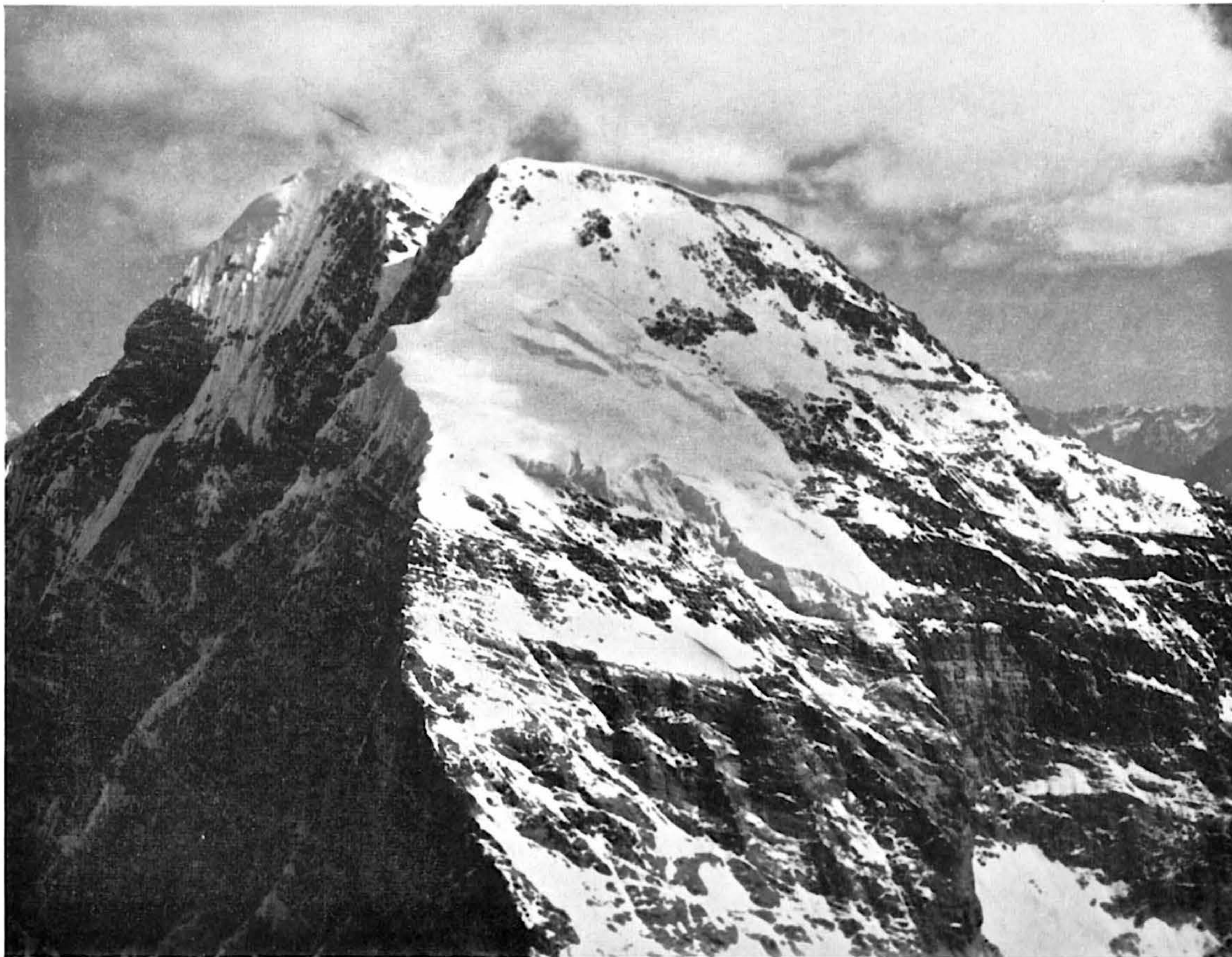
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Expedition photo]

VIEW OF KOH-E-BANDAKÂ (6,500 M.) FROM HALF WAY UP THE SAKHI VALLEY.

(No. 66)



Expedition photo]

KOH-E-BANDAKÂ NORTH SUMMIT (6,400 M.) AND, BEHIND, THE MAIN SUMMIT (6,500 M.), SEEN FROM KOH-E-BANDAKÂ-SAKHI (6,200 M.).

(No. 67)



Expedition photo]

HEAD OF THE IBLAR VALLEY: VIEW OF KOH-E-KÂ-JURM (5,500 M.).

(No. 68)



Expedition photo]

VIEW TO THE EAST, SHOWING TIRICH MIR AND NOSHAQ, FROM THE NORTH SHOULDER OF KOH-E-KÂ-SAFED.

(No. 69)



Expedition photo]

VIEW FROM THE RAMGUL PASS TO THE SOUTH (NURISTAN).

(No. 70)