

Karakoram 1985

Paul Nunn

Plate 86

The general emphasis among the expeditions of 1985 continued to be towards the highest peaks. The pursuit of 'huit mille metres' has eclipsed efforts on the multitude of lower mountains at least in terms of the numbers of climbers and expeditions. A result is overcrowding of popular mountains like Gasherbrums 2 and 1, Broad Peak and K2, especially as most climbers are not innovating in the sense of trying new or less well-known routes. This does not mean that great achievements have ceased, but they tend to be buried under the efforts of earnest and unimaginative peak baggers following the *voies normales*. Nor can solo or very fast ascents have as much meaning when they take place on routes 'bashed out' by others.

In this perspective the ascent of the W. Face of Gasherbrum 4 by Voytek Kurtyka and Robert Schauer stands out. They appear to have followed the route begun by Mo Anthoine's 1978 expedition and attempted since then by a Japanese Party. They climbed alpine style on difficult and dangerous mixed ground, reaching the ridge after six bivouacs. Voytek was disappointed not to have the strength to continue to the main summit, and retreated by the NW ridge with further bivouacs. They reached the valley extremely tired and, in Voytek's case, admitting to hallucinatory fatigue.

In the 8000m league, Gasherbrums 1 & 2, K2 and Broad Peak hogged attention. About 12 expeditions set out to climb the two 8000m Gasherbrums. They were spread through the summer, but made the Base Camp a strange and insanitary place, especially as several were either large or had considerable numbers of trekker clients or visitors. Problems there, and presumably at Broad Peak and K2 Base, and at Concordia, are comparable to those at the Khumbu Base below Everest.

Early in the season a strong team of Italians led by Agostino da Polenza climbed the SE spur on Gasherbrum 2. They opened up the route up the S Gasherbrum glacier and did the climb in a single push from the 6000m level. Da Polenza himself took part in the second group which climbed Gasherbrum 1 by the NW face. Da Polenza and Camozzi reached the top, but their companions went down. Subsequently on 19 June Calgano and Vidoni, two of the three climbers who had succeeded earlier on Gasherbrum 2, did an ascent of Gasherbrum 1 by a new route. Thus the project 8000m, in which a core of Italian climbers intend to do all the 8000m peaks in five years, got off to a creditable start using relatively lightweight tactics, no high altitude porters, no bottled oxygen and no fixed ropes. Unlike later parties they had to open all their routes themselves.

Subsequent climbs were more involved with other expeditions more complicated and more difficult to evaluate. Eric Escoffier and Benoit Chamoux (French) made very fast ascents of Gasherbrums 1 & 2. Escoffier climbed

Gasherbrum 1 in a day from 6000m, catching up with Chamoux who had set out the day before at 7500m and continuing soloing together to the top. He went on to climb K2 (below) and to make an attempt on Broad Peak. Unsupported by high altitude porters was Renato Casarotto's ascent of Gasherbrum 2 with his wife; the Swedish ascent including Tommy Sandberg (49) who has taken part in all previous Swedish Himalayan expeditions; the ascents by a Japanese party; and by two other French groups, one led by Louis Le Pivain and the other by Benoit Renard. A third French pair, Thierry Renard and Pierre Mure Ravaud, reached the top with the express intention of enabling Renard to make a ski descent. This he did, but instead of being solo it was joined by Michel Metzger of the Pivain group. The latter found skis belonging to an earlier 'spectacular' led by Jean Marc Boivin, and used them to good effect in skiing the S face with Thierry Renard. This caused some subsequent controversy as Renard's companion required support in coming down and Renard had billed his ski descent as a solo. Metzger poo-pooed the skiing difficulty, negated the solo and claimed that Renard had paid insufficient attention to the needs of his climbing companion.

This circus had been preceded by the even more elaborate French expeditions to enable Jean Marc Boivin to hang-glide from the top of Gasherbrum and Pierre Geveux to parachute down. Both were successful in mid-July. Unfortunately the Japanese film camera man, Tamoji Nakoro, died in an avalanche during the climb and a French climber also died, apparently of oedema. Boivin was beaten to the first descent from 8000m by the parachutist Pierre Geveux, who pipped him by four days on 14 July. Both were world records, but were surrounded by large scale expeditions including strong high altitude porters and hoo-ha of an extravagant nature summed up harshly by an unknown critic in Skardu — 'Boivin success — seulement deux morts'. Both involved strong climbing performances at altitude, but they, and much else, were obscured by the atmosphere of Chamonix-Karakoram. Later expeditions were not always so 'successful'. An Italian group did a new route on the left edge of the NW face of Gasherbrum 1, one member climbing it and continuing alone to the summit, then meeting his companions and descending with them in worsening weather. After a major storm in early August no more ascents were achieved, despite efforts by the Scottish Gasherbrum 1 expedition and an Italian group on Gasherbrum II. Geoff Cohen, Des Rubens, Clive Rowlands and Paul Nunn tried a new route on the NW face of Gasherbrum 3. They reached Base Camp on 11 July and at first followed the 'trade route' to Gasherbrum 2 (to Camp 1 at 6000m). They found the 'Cassin-Bonatti' 1958 route through the upper icefall of the S Gasherbrum glacier, and established Camp 3 at about 6900m in the upper coire of the glacier on 1 August. A severe storm drove them down, leaving ice caves at Camp 2 in the icefall and in the coire. Rowlands decided to go home. The others returned in better weather but bad snow conditions on 10 August to Camp 1. After another day of indifferent weather Cohen and Rubens pressed on to Camps 2 and 3, while Nunn went down. In several days of isolated and difficult climbing they climbed to about 7700m on the unclimbed NW ridge of the mountain, but were eventually forced down by windy conditions and difficult, complicated terrain. The mountain has been climbed



86 Latok II glacier from the NW ridge of Latok II with the Biafo glacier behind. All these small peaks are unclimbed.

Photo: Paul Nunn

once, by the Gasherbrum 2 standard route and S face, by the Polish-British (Alison Chadwick) party in 1975.

On K2 a large Japanese expedition was successful via the Abruzzi late in the summer. A Franco-Swiss party comprising Erhard Loretan, Nicole Niquille, Jean Troillet, Yves Morand, Eric Escoffier, Daniel Lacroix, Stephane Schaffter and Jean Francois Magnificat set off on the Abruzzi on 4 July. Climbing together solo they reached 6800m (Camp 2) that afternoon. Leaving at 4am next morning Loretan and Escoffier reached 7400m by 11.30am and the others joined them at 3pm. Magnificat decided to go down. Schaffter and Lacroix decided to rest until the next morning but Escoffier left with the four Swiss at 9pm. Nicole Niquille gave up because of leg pains, though she had spent two days above 8000m the previous week. At 8000m they failed to locate a tent left from an earlier sortie and had to press on. They took a traverse line under a serac on a slope of 50°, taking 3-4 hours to pass below it. From the shoulder the final 400m slope was climbed and they reached the top at 1.30pm, 15 hours after their departure.

They retreated meeting Schaffter and Lacroix at 8000m and reached 7400m by 7pm. Next day they descended to Base Camp. Schaffter and Lacroix also reached the top but became separated on the descent around 8200m. Lacroix failed to appear. Subsequent searches by Magnificat, who reached 8000m yielded no further information.

A Pakistani expedition from the Army School of Mountaineering was successful on Broad Peak. Led by Major Rayyaz Hussain they fixed three camps. On 30 July they left Camp 3 (7250m) at 2.30pm and moved to 7700m below the col. Next day they left at 7.30am and reached the top at 3.30pm. Three climbers, Major Rayyaz Hussain, Major Zahid Mahmood and Captain Jawad Pirzada, reached the top. Bad weather made the descent dangerous on this and other climbs at the beginning of August. Meanwhile Wanda Rutkiewicz, after climbing Nanga Parbat, was unsuccessful in her attempt on Broad Peak. One of her companions, Barbara Kozłowska, was drowned in a glacier stream on 20 August.

On Masherbrum the Japanese Kansai Karakoram expedition, led by Shin Kashu, did a new route on the NW face from the Yermanendu valley. They climbed expedition style with four camps and with fixed ropes. Leaving Camp 4 on 22 July, they bivouaced and reached the main summit (7821m) next day. The climbers were S Kashu, S Wada, M Yamamoto, Y Yabukawa, T Shigero, H Ito, T Terauchi, T Toyama, M Tatsuta and R Nishizutsumi. Near the summit they discovered the bodies of two Polish climbers, M Malatynski and P Nowacki, who died on the first ascent of Masherbrum SW (7806m) in 1981. They completed the first ascent of the N ridge and the upper part of the NW face. At the same time an Austrian party of six climbers led by Robert Renzler, climbed from the Mandu valley and ascended the left side of the 3500m NW face in 12 days. Three camps were set up at 5500m, 5900m and 6300m. There were dangers from seracs and ice avalanches. On 21 July they began their ascent with nights at camps 2 and 3 and a tent bivouac at 7200m. A rock-barrier was climbed at 7400m using ropes left by the Japanese. Three climbers, Andi Orgler, Robert Renzler and Michael Sarcber reached the summit ridge at

7800m and then the top before returning to their bivouac. In the night bad weather began and they descended in snow storms and avalanche conditions to the Yermanendu. Subsequently, they climbed the 1700m SE face of Urdukas Peak (5980m). In previous years Japanese and American parties had reached 5500m on Masherbrum N face. Mike Searle's British party tried the unclimbed, long E ridge without success. Masherbrum remains a formidable mountain. The main summit has been reached by four members of the American expedition of 1960 and in 1983 by two Japanese before this third (1985) ascent. Masherbrum SW remains unrepeatd since the Polish three man ascent of 1983.

As usual there were a considerable number of expeditions on Nanga Parbat. The Polish all women's expedition set up four camps on the Kinshofer route on the Diamir face. Wanda Rutkiewicz, Anna Czerwinska and Krystyna Pal-mowska reached the top on 15 July. On 8 July two Japanese from Nagasaki reached the top, and the French, Bernard Muller and Laurence de la Ferriere likewise. On 11 July Michael Dacher and Peter Habeler were also successful. Laurence de la Ferriere was the second woman to succeed on Nanga Parbat, a success closely followed by the all women's Polish ascent. A Polish expedition also climbed the SE Pillar of the mountain. For the most part, they followed the route pioneered by Herrligkoffer's 1982 expedition. On 13 July Zygmunt Heinrich, Jerzy Kukuczka, Slawomir Lobodzinski and a Mexican, Carlos Carsolio, reached the summit. Piotr Kalmus from Krakow was killed in an avalanche between Camps 1 & 2. He was swept over 1000m on 10 July.

Doug Scott's expedition was successful on Diran, but did not manage Rakaposhi. Early efforts seem to have been distracted by the rescue of an Austrian climber and the expedition suffered porter and illness problems. Much depleted, they met bad weather which also prevented them climbing Nanga Parbat. An Austrian party climbed Diran and Lindsay Griffin and Chris Forest tried Hikmul (6300m), in the rarely frequented Sosbun glacier basin, without success.

Tragedy befell the South Wales Mountaineering Club party which set out to do the Biafo-Hispar Trek and to climb small peaks, and also to make reconnaissance for a possible future expedition of a more ambitious nature. A base camp was set up at Snow Lake in late July. Then Dave Parsons became altitude sick and departed with his wife down the Hispar. Bob Williams was injured in a crevasse fall and went back the same way with Don Hillman. The remaining pair, Mike Harber and Mike Morris, remained planning to try Lukpe La Brakk (6593m). When they did not return at the appointed time relatives and friends alerted the Pakistani authorities and the Foreign Office, and a major search ensued by helicopter and on the ground. The Snow Lake camp remained in existence, but there was no trace of Advanced Base, or of the climbers. The search discovered a body on the Hispar Glacier which remains unidentified. A Japanese expedition to Latok 2 NW ridge, led by Ikuo Sekikawa, discovered a body in the surface ice of the glacier and reburied it. Site and clothing confirmed that it was the body of Don Morrison, who fell into a crevasse close to the place where the remains came to the surface.

An Alpine Club visit to the Chomolungma area involved a large number of

climbers, but the peaks, as so often in the Karakoram, were found to be harder than expected and few summits were reached. A Pinnacle Club party trekked into the Shimshal area. Most successful of UK efforts was the visit to the Siachen Glacier area of the East Karakoram. A party of six Indian and five British made major first ascents of rarely visited peaks near the Terong Valley. They explored 3 glaciers and crossed five cols. Leaving Leh on 12 June they started up the Siachen on the 14th. Dave Wilkinson and Jim Fotheringham were successful on Rimo 3 (7233m). They had set off for Rimo 1 by the Ibex Col but thought the proposed route too dangerous. Therefore they switched objectives and made the first ascent by a *TD inf* route. Other firsts were Sondhi (6480m) climbed by Samant and Dhiren on 13 July via the W ridge, and W icefall. Sundrar (6300m) was climbed by the same pair the previous day. On 12 July Boga and Agrawal did the S ridge of Lharimo (6070m). Doab (6045m) was climbed by Contractor and Harsinh on 15 July by the S ridge and Safina (5975m) on 6 July by Samant and Contractor via the W ridge. Rimo 1 was attempted by Tony Saunders and Steve Venables who reached 6900m on the SW spur. Saigat was tried by Kapadia and Pratapsinh who reached 5800m on the S face. Later in the expedition climbing was concentrated on the S Terong and Shelkar Chorten glaciers. Venables soloed Chorten (6050m) by the W ridge, on 22 July, Nagabong Terong (6180m) by the E ridge on the 24th. They had difficulty crossing the Terong Topko river during their return.

On smaller peaks near the Baltoro two Spaniards, Antonio Martinez and Joaquin Carril, climbed the NE face of Biarchedi (6759m). It proved to be a steep ice route of 2300m. The peak is in the Masherbrum Group and is reached by crossing the Yermanendu Glacier which descends from Masherbrum. Miri Ercolani, an Italian woman climber, reported a solo ascent of Gasherbrum 6 (7007m) from the Duke of Abruzzi Glacier. An Eiselin Sports group (Switzerland) led by Fredy Graf did Sia Kangri (7422m). Another Swiss party led by Anton Spiring climbed Kanjut Sar (6831m) and a Japanese party led by Yukiteshi Tanikawa climbed Bobisqhr Peak (6416m). Another succeeded on Passu Peak (7284m).