# Area Notes

## Nepal 1986

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**Winter 85/86** The weather was exceptionally fine during this season with only two periods of heavy snowfall between 26 and 28 December and 11 and 14 February, though as usual the fine weather was accompanied by very high winds at altitude.

It is now semi-officially accepted that Base Camp may be established well before 1 December, and even that some stocking of lower camps and fixing of rope may be carried out before the season starts. Nevertheless it is still the rule that no camps above Base Camp may be occupied. This flexibility gives plenty of scope for climbing even the highest peaks in the first three weeks of December, when the weather is usually quite fine and stable.

16 expeditions attempted ten 8000m peaks and six lower peaks, eight were successful and, remarkably, there were seven expeditions from Korea, of which three were on Everest.

The Poles, who are easily the most experienced and successful Himalayan winter mountaineers, only had one trip this winter, but it was probably the most significant. Kukuczka and Wielicki made the first winter ascent of Kangchenjunga on 11 January, climbing the original SW face route with four camps. Unfortunately, the experienced Czok became ill at the top camp and died of pulmonary oedema at Camp 3. On Dhaulagiri I a Swiss team comprising Troillet, Loretan and Steiner made a remarkable alpine ascent of the E face to the SE ridge. They began from Base Camp (4100m) on 6 December, then had bivis at 5700m and 7700m (just below the NE ridge) and reached the summit on 8 December, then descended all the way back to their first bivi on the same day.

A few years ago the Japanese had the reputation for mounting huge expeditions. Their 'block-busting' style has now been adopted by the Koreans, and the majority of Japanese expeditions are now thankfully a lot smaller. An example of this is the fine alpine ascent of Manaslu by the two Japanese Yamada and Saito, who reached the summit on 14 December.

An international expedition successfully climbed Cho Oyu by the normal W face/ridge. Two Czechs, Becik and Stejskal, reached the summit on 5 December after an alpine-style ascent using three bivis. Unfortunately, Alan Burgess (UK), Marshall (Can), Athans (US) and Ballenger (US) had to turn back from high on the mountain, after Marshall became ill with oedema.

On the lower peaks there were a number of fine ascents, particularly a new route on the steep rock and ice of the NE face of Ama Dablam. Kennedy (US) and Buhler (Can) had seven bivis before they reached the summit on 7 December; they then descended the normal S ridge. On Gaurishankar a Korean

expedition made the first winter ascent by repeating the US/Sherpa SW face route. Choi Han-Jo and Ang Kami (his second ascent) reached the summit on 16 January, using three camps. Another Korean expedition climbed a new route and made the first winter ascent of Kangtega by climbing the S ridge, using three camps and reaching the summit on 31 December. On Taweche a joint Korean/Japanese expedition climbed the S face to the SE ridge (Jap 85), reaching the summit on 12 January; unfortunately Kadomoto (Jap) was killed.

Expeditions which failed included Ama Dablam (NZ), Annapurna (Bulgarian), three to Everest (all Korean), Karyolung (Korean/Nepalese), and two on Makalu (Japan and Italian—Messner).

**Pre-Monsoon** 31 expeditions attempted mountains in the spring, only 13 succeeded, and in general it was a dull and uninteresting season, particularly on the 8000m peaks.

On Lhotse a small Japanese team climbed the normal route with oxygen, camps and Sherpas. Fukushima, Haruki, Nima Temba and Nima Dorje reached the summit on 4 May. Cho Oyu is a popular mountain at the moment, probably because of its relatively easy and safe normal SW face route. This season three expeditions climbed the mountain. First was a Polish expedition who climbed the true W ridge (a variation of the normal route). Gajewski, Pawlikowski, Konopka, Danielak and Osika reached the summit on 29 April and 1 and 3 May. Second was an international team who repeated the Polish variation in semi-alpine style, shortly after. Habeler (Austria), Rüedi (Swiss), Smith (US), Schleypen (German), Daum (German), Brakus (Yugoslav) and Lorenz (Austrian) reached the summit on 9 and 10 May. Finally, a US/Canadian/UK expedition climbed the standard route using four camps. Frush (US) and Hambly (first UK ascent—but is resident in the US) reached the summit on 11 May. The only other success on a 8000m peak was on Dhaulagiri I by the Germans Haerter, Hirtreiter, Larcher, Odenthal and Pfleging. They used four camps on the normal NE ridge route, reaching the summit in two groups on 3 and 5 May.

On the lower peaks there were several fine and noteworthy ascents, particularly on Gyachung Kang, Kangtega and Ama Dablam. On Gyachung Kang a French/Nepalese expedition made the second ascent (1st by the Japanese in 1964) by a new route on the SW pillar. The route climbed a very dangerous icefall and then steep snow and rock which varied from 60° to vertical. Three camps were used and Gramond, Maurel, Marmier, Tresallet, Esteve and Giot reached the summit on 12, 13 and 15 May. A US/UK trip to Kangtega and Nuptse climbed the impressive NW ridge of Kangtega, using five camps. Marc Twight (US) and Alison Hargreaves (UK) reached the summit on 1 May. Unfortunately Twight and Jeff Lowe failed on the excellent granite S spur of Nuptse because of bad weather. The obviously dangerous W face of Ama Dablam is nevertheless a very obvious and challenging line. On 15 April two Italians, Brugger and Walde, reached the summit after a rapid climb from Camp 2 at the bottom of the face.

Other successful ascents were by the Koreans on Dhaulagiri II (S face to E ridge), New Zealanders on Langshisha Ri (S face), Japanese on Langtang

Lirung (S face), Koreans on Gangapurna (E ridge from S) and the Nepalese Police on Annapurna IV (NW ridge).

Expeditions failed on Annapurna I (Bulgarian and Italian), Annapurna II (US and Spanish), Annapurna South (Yugoslav), Ama Dablam (Kenyan), Bhrikuti (French/Nepal), Dhaulagiri I (Yugoslav), Everest (Poles and Japanese), Ganesh I (Swiss), Ganesh II (Korean), Makalu II (US), Kangchenjunga (Australian), Lhotse Shar (UK), Manaslu (German/Austrian), Makalu (US), Tilicho (German).

**Post-Monsoon** The weather and climbing conditions were average this season. The monsoon cleared at the end of September, then there were two weeks of unsettled weather, followed by generally fine weather until mid-December. 48 expeditions took advantage of these conditions, of which 22 succeeded, with the loss of 12 lives (2.7 per cent of climbers).

The most significant climb was the first ascent of the E ridge of Manaslu by the Poles Kukuczka (12th 8000m peak) and Hayzer. They reached the summit on 10 November, then descended the NE face, making the first traverse of Manaslu. They climbed alpine-style, though the expedition had already fixed ropes up a different line on the ridge, and used five bivis in ascent and two on descent.

The greatest personal achievement was Messner's. He finally climbed all the 14 8000m peaks in the world when he climbed Makalu with three camps on 26 September with Kammerlander and Mutschlechner, and Lhotse with two camps on 16 October with Kammerlander. Messner is generally regarded as the finest Himalayan mountaineer, and these ascents emphasize this accolade.

Another fine Himalayan mountaineer, Rüedi (Swiss) with Wiekicki (Pole) made a rapid ascent of the NW side of Makalu, reaching the summit on 24 September. Tragically, Rüedi died of altitude sickness on the descent; he had climbed ten 8000m peaks! On Kangchenjunga a Spanish expedition climbed the mountain using four camps; Permanye and Ang Rita reached the summit on 24 October. Over on the W side of Nepal the Italians Martini, Destefani and Giambisi made a fine semi-alpine ascent of Annapurna I by the standard N face route, using two bivis above camp 1, reaching the summit on 21 September. The much-tried S face of Ngozumba Kang leading to the E ridge of Cho Oyu was the objective of a Japanese expedition; they failed as did everybody before them, but two of the members, Hino and Shraishi, went on to make a rapid ascent of the normal route, reaching the summit on 16 October.

A Polish expedition on Dhaulagiri I made an ascent of the unclimbed S face to the W ridge at 7500m, but then strong winds stopped further progress. Similar circumstances halted a French group, when Gabarrou and Sherpa Pemba Norbu made the first ascent of 'The peak with no name' (a point on the ridge between Annapurna I and Fang at 7900m) on 8 October. But they failed to traverse to the main summit of Annapurna because of high winds.

On the lower peaks there were a number of significant ascents. The difficult main summit of Chamlang received two ascents. A Korean/Nepalese expedition made the second ascent of the mountain, when three Koreans and two Sherpas climbed the S ridge using four camps and one bivi, reaching the summit on 10

October. The second was by a Japanese/Nepalese expedition, when Kashimi and Wangel Sherpa reached the summit on 16 October, making the first ascent of the arduous W ridge to the W face using three camps.

Two Scottish climbers, Sandy and Rick Allan, climbed a new route in ascent and descent on Pumori, when they made a six-day alpine ascent of a route on the S face, reaching the top on 19 October, then descending the W ridge. A Japanese team on Himalchuli East (Main) made a new route up the S ridge to the SW face. Four climbers reached the summit on 26 October using five camps and a certain amount of oxygen. (I would have thought that oxygen is rather out of place nowadays, certainly on a peak below 8000m?)

The peaks above Khumbu are particularly attractive to climbers. This is not only because of their beauty, but also because of their ease of access and their heights which are particularly suitable for alpine-style climbing. Increasing numbers of mountaineers are climbing on these peaks, and I would have thought that a change in Nepalese Government policy would benefit all concerned. It would surely be better to adopt a more flexible policy on these peaks which does not involve advanced booking (though still paying royalties on a per-person basis), and without the requirement for Liaison Officers etc (instead there could be a mobile group of Liaison Officers based in Khumbu which could check on the climbers). The numbers of climbers (and royalties) would increase, and bureaucracy would be minimal.

On these peaks in the Khumbu there were a number of fine ascents. A US/Canadian team on Kangtega made the first ascent of the NE buttress in a seven-and-a-half-day alpine-style push. Smith, Teare and Hesse reached the summit on 29 October. There were three successful expeditions to Ama Dablam. A Yugoslav team fixed ropes up the S face on a new line until they reached the normal S ridge at 6100m; Benkovic, Alikalfic, and Puzak reached the summit between 16 and 19 October. Miroslav Smid (solo) and Homberger and Jaeggi climbed the W face, reaching the top on 11 and 18 October respectively. Then six members of a Swiss/French team reached the summit via the normal S ridge on 22 and 26 October.

A new route was climbed by a Korean expedition on Langtang Lirung via the SW ridge. Five Koreans and one Sherpa reached the summit on 10 October. A Japanese team made the first ascent of Tripura Hiunchuli (hanging glacier) N Peak. Hata, Tokimoto and Sherpa Ang Phuri Lama reached the summit on 17 October.

Other successful expeditions include the French on Annapurna IV (NW ridge), Germans on Dorje Lhakpa (W ridge), Koreans on Makalu II (NW ridge), and the Nepalese army on Tukuche.

The expeditions which failed were: Annapurna I (French × 2), Annapurna III (Italian), Cho Oyu (Swiss), Dhaulagiri I (Austrian and French), Everest (French/Swiss), Fang (Korea), Gyachung Kang (Basque), Gaurishankar (Spanish), Gangapurna/Annapurna III (Korean), Himalchuli North (German), Jannu (Austrian), Kiratchuli (Tent Peak) (French), Lhotse Shar (Spanish and Swiss), Langtang Lirung (Spanish), Lhotse/Everest (International), Makalu (French and Italians), Manaslu (Columbian and Yugoslav), Makalu II (Israel), Pumori (NZ and Japanese), and Thamserku (Spanish).

In conclusion, the winter season, especially before Christmas, is becoming more popular, and in fact the success rate is very similar to the other seasons. Pre-monsoon was disappointing, with only a few notable ascents, and these on the mountains below 8000m. Post-Monsoon was a good season, with many fine ascents, highlighted by Messner climbing Makalu and Lhotse, and so climbing all 14 8000m peaks.

**Postscript**

Mike Cheney (Kathmandu) has sent some comments on Roger Chorley's remarks on Nepal in his Valedictory Address (*AJ91*, 9–18, 1986). They are summarized below.

The new road into Tibet is from the Sun Kosi road, not the Langtang. The latter road stops some 30km short of the border, but it does bring the Langtang valley to within four days of Kathmandu, and it is possible to reach Dhunche in about seven hours by bus from Kathmandu via Trisuli Bazaar. At present the use of the road is controlled by the army.

There has been no increase in the number of 'Trekking Peaks' in the last five years. These peaks require a climbing permit issued by the Nepal Mountaineering Association, as well as a valid trekking permit. The cost of the climbing permit is either US$300 or US$150 for up to ten climbers. Of the 18 peaks listed as Trekking Peaks, 11 are over 6000m, the highest being Mera Peak (6654m) which costs US$300. The other seven peaks, of which the lowest is Mardi Himal (5587m), cost US$150. As long as no Nepalese employee is required to go above Base Camp, there are no other costs over and above the normal trekking cost. In Khumbu and Annapurna Sanctuary, it is just about possible to attempt some of the peaks from huts/tea houses with a one-night bivi camp. If a climbing guide or high-altitude porter is required (some of the peaks can be a 4 or 5-day climb), then these Nepalese employees must be insured at a cost of about £40 to cover a life/disablement insurance policy to a value of Rs75,000. Further, the climbing rules also state: The Sirdar/Guide will be provided with 'climbing equipment and necessary clothing if required to go above Base Camp'. (See paragraph 8, section 3.) Generally speaking, Rs3000 or thereabouts is considered the norm as cash in lieu of the 'necessary clothing'. The young climbing guides (often *not* Sherpas) perform well, being both good companions and competent climbers. The Rs3000 compares well with the cash in lieu (around Rs12,000) demanded by Sherpas going above Base Camp on regular expeditions under Mountaineering Regulations.

The name 'Trekking Peak' is misleading; a change to 'Alpine Peak' is desirable.