

FURTHER NOTES ON THE RUWENZORI

BY D. L. BUSK

FOR some months I have been interesting myself in the history of the range from a mountaineering point of view and the following notes may be of value to others who intend to climb there. The first is contributed by R. M. Bere, with a few notes by myself in brackets. I may say that I, and all who study the range, are immensely indebted to him for his researches and local knowledge.

It will be noted that in the title I have said 'The Ruwenzori' not 'Ruwenzori.' I have myself previously always used the latter, but I have been converted by Bere and others, who point out that the Ruwenzori is a range and not a mountain (cf. *the Alps*, *the Caucasus*, but not *the Kenya* nor *the Kilimanjaro*, which, though they each have outlying peaks, are really isolated mountains, not ranges).

I hope in the not too distant future to produce a sketch map of the range, marking all the peaks and routes mentioned in these notes.

I. EARLY HISTORY.—By R. M. Bere

In *A. J.* 58. 483, appeared an article on the exploration of the Ruwenzori, which was published without the notes and references that I had intended to add. There were also a number of misprints; corrections of these, together with the notes, are now set out below.

The *Uganda Journal*, so frequently referred to, is available in the library of the Royal Geographical Society.

Page 484. *Parke and Mounteney—Jephson's Sight of the Snows.*

'My personal experiences in Equatorial Africa,' by T. H. Parke.

'Ruwenzori and Elgon footnote,' by H. B. Thomas, *Uganda Journal*, 1935, Vol. 2, p. 249.

A note in *Uganda Journal*, by H. B. Thomas. 1946.

Page 484. *Lunyoro and Lukonjo.*

The Bakonjo live in the mountains or in their immediate neighbourhood; the surrounding country to the east and north-east is occupied by Batoro and Banyoro whose language is Lunyoro. These were the people with whom Stanley was in contact and who seeing it from some distance would be more likely to have a name for the whole Ruwenzori than the Bakonjo, whose world it is, and who would therefore have names only for individual places. Both Banyoro and Bakonjo are Bantu people having a mutually intelligible language. The Bakonjo appear to be remnants of the truly indigenous people: the Banyoro have a history of reaching their present home from the north (Nilotics) and north-east (hamitic Galla from Ethiopia). [The Galla

only reached Ethiopia in the middle of the 16th century. Their original home was probably in northern Kenya or Uganda.—D. L. B.]

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'Gamba-Ragara'—the name was (and sometimes still is) used in Ankole to the south where Stanley first heard it—see article 'Early Explorers in Ankole.' *Uganda Journal*, Vol. 2, p. 197. [It is said by Osmaston to mean 'that which strains the eyes' or 'that which glistens.'—D. L. B.]

Page 485.

'Gamalaga Gafumba Biri' is correct, not 'Gabinba.' I also meant 'true' not 'new' in line 8.

I was told of this expression by an old European planter from the district and have subsequently heard it from native sources. This again is not a Lukonjo expression. [See also *Geographical Journal*, Vol. LXIX, No. 6, p. 530, where confirmation is given from another source.—D. L. B.]

The Birunga Volcanoes are also often known as 'Bumfumbira,' again the reference to 'cooking.' [Also Virunga.—D. L. B.]

Page 485. *Emin-Stuhlmann Expedition.*

'Emin Pasha in Central Africa' and Stuhlmann's 'Mit Emin Pascha ins Herz Von Afrika' and 'Die Tagebücher von Dr. Emin Pascha'; also noted on pp. 10 and 20 of De Filippi's 'Ruwenzori.' There are other books and references in *Uganda Journal* to Emin, a fascinating personality.

[Page 485. For CAMPIYA CLUPA read CAMPI YA CHUPA (i.e. "Bottle Camp").—D. L. B.]

Page 485. *Sitwell Diary.*

Manuscript diary in the Secretariat Library at Entebbe and note published in the *Uganda Journal*, Vol. II, No. 1, by H. B. Thomas (March 1947); Thomas was joint author with Sir Robert Scott of 'Uganda.'

Page 485. *Scott Elliott.*

Pages 11 and 20 of De Filippi's 'Ruwenzori.'

Page 486. *Moore, Fergusson, Bagge.*

All mentioned in De Filippi (*op. cit.*) and Sir Harry Johnston's 'The Uganda Protectorate' (also interesting on the name).
—Moore, J. E. S. 'To the Mountains of the Moon.'

Page 487. *Wylde, Fisher, Grauer.*

All mentioned in De Filippi (*op. cit.*) also 'Uganda Notes' an early C.M.S. publication 1905 and 1906, extracts republished in *Uganda Journal*, Vol. XII. September 1948.
—Mrs. Fisher, 'On the Borders of Pigmy Land.'

Page 488, line 14. For 'River Rock Shelters' read 'Rivers, Rock Shelters.'

Page 488. *Wollaston, A. F. R.*

De Filippi again and Wollaston's 'From Ruwenzori to the Congo,' as well as a published volume of letters.

Many of the early expeditions are mentioned also in 'Uganda Memories,' by Sir Albert Cook.

[Page 490. For MOEBIOS read MOEBIUS.—D. L. B.]

Page 492. Becquaert (not Recquaeat), Humbert (not Hunbeat) and, of course, Congo (not Coulo). See 'Hautes Montagnes d'Afrique,' by Dr. René Jeannel (Paris Natural History Museum, 1950), pp. 36, 37. [Also for BU TAGU read BUTAGU.—D. L. B.]

Page 494. British Museum Expedition.

—'Mountains of the Moon,' by Patrick Synge.

'Polish Expedition,' *A. J.* 54. 275 (1944). Posnett and Bere.

[Not to be confused with the earlier Polish expedition recorded in IV below.—D. L. B.]

A. J. 55. 259 (1946).

C. C. J. 1944, p. 230.

Letters from Haddow to R. M. Bere.

[Page 494. For KRAEPLIN read KRAEPELIN.—D. L. B.]

Page 494. *Haddow's New Peak on Luigi Di Savoia.*

The named peaks are Weismann, climbed by Humphreys in 1932, Sella and Stairs, both by the Abruzzi Expedition. There are two other peaks on Luigi, one of which, the smaller, between Sella and Stairs, was climbed by Humphreys in 1932 (see *G. J.* 82., December 1933, p. 491 top) and the other two to the west and possibly part of Stairs by Haddow alone on 28/1/47. This is the fourth peak mentioned on p. 168 of De Filippi's 'Ruwenzori.'

Page 495. Ladkin and Bere.

A. J. 55. May 1946, p. 259.

Haddow and Holmes.

Bulletin of M. C. of E. A., No. 5, December 1947 (Roneoed).

Hicks on Gessi.

A. J. 56., May 1947, p. 17.

Hicks' Map.

'The Portal Peaks of Ruwenzori,'—article in *G. J.* 108, p. 210.

See also 'Ruwenzori,' by R. M. Bere and P. H. Hicks. *Uganda Journal*, Vol. 10, p. 84.

II. THE CAMERON EXPEDITION, 1938

I could find no mention of this expedition in the *ALPINE JOURNAL*, though it was described in the *Ladies Alpine Journal* for 1939, page 14 *et seq.*, illustrated by photos and a map. However, Mr. Dangar has turned up the brief reference in *A. J.* 50. 323. This note also mentions the German expedition (see III below). Incidentally for 'Mt. Stain' read 'Stairs Peak.'

The party consisted of Miss Una Cameron and the Courmayeur guides, Edouard Bareux and Elisée Croux. Ascents were made of Alexandra, Speke, and Luigi di Savoia (Sella Peak).

To date Miss Cameron shares with Mrs. Firmin the honour of being the 'highest lady' on Ruwenzori. As far as I can ascertain, no lady has yet climbed Margherita.

The most important expedition was an ascent of Mount Baker from the Scott Elliott Pass, which for the sake of convenience I have dealt with in the following section.

Subsequently the party climbed Mount Kenya and I think Miss Cameron was the first and remains the only lady to have reached Batian, the higher summit (Mrs. Firmin, Miss Carroll and Miss Sladen, and perhaps others, have climbed Nelion).¹ There is an excellent marked photo of the ordinary route, first ascended by Shipton and Tilman in 1929, opposite page 64 of the *L.A. J.* for 1939.

The party finally ascended Kilimanjaro (Kibo peak).

III. THE GERMAN EXPEDITION OF 1937-38

The existence of this was first brought to my notice by the *Schweizerische Stiftung für Alpine Forschungen*, to which, and to M. Marcel Kurz in particular, I am deeply indebted, not only for information, but for their efforts to trace and obtain for me copies of various reports.

The results of the expedition were recorded in the *Zeitschrift* of the D.A.V. for 1939, but owing to the war no copy of this reached the A.C. library. It is to be hoped that a copy will now be procured to complete our set. The following is a summary.

The party first climbed the Kibo and Mawenzi peaks of Kilimanjaro and then, omitting Mount Kenya, moved to the Ruwenzori where they accomplished two new routes of considerable importance. Both parts of the expedition are illustrated by route sketches, rough but adequate sketch maps and good photographs, two of which are here reproduced.

Plate 1² shows the Margherita (M) and Albert (A) Peaks of the Stanley Group from the north-north-east. S = the Stuhlmann Pass

¹ I have since learnt that Miss Sladen, climbing guideless with her brother, reached the higher summit a few hours after Miss Cameron. Mrs. Graaff, accompanied by her husband, also made the climb in 1952.

² The 1939 Polish route (see IV below) is not marked on this photo, which does not show all the steps in the N.E. ridge. Roughly speaking it follows the left-hand skyline.



Photo, German Expedition.]

PLATE I.—MARGHERITA PEAK FROM NORTH NORTH-EAST.
(For explanation of markings, see text.)



Photo, German Expedition.]

PLATE II.—MOUNT BAKER FROM STUHLMANN PASS.

and B = bivouacs. The lower bivouac is stated to have been at 4,470 m. (= 14,662 ft.). It was reached with difficulty after a track had been cut through the vegetation. A gully to the right was investigated, but found impassible in its upper part. A traverse to the left was therefore decided on. After an early start a difficult ice chimney had to be overcome and much trouble was experienced with *verglas* on the rocks and with thick mist. The party had, however, only rarely to move one at a time. Once above the hanging glacier attempts were made to gain the north-east ridge, but these failed at first owing to cornices. Only some 250 ft. below the summit was the ridge attained. The summit of Margherita was reached in late afternoon (no exact times are given) and the party continued to Albert Peak, where an uncomfortable and stormy night was passed in a tent sack. Next day the party passed again over Margherita and descended with difficulty to the col between this peak and Alexandra. After much cutting in very steep ice the party roped down to save time. Alexandra was duly reached and in soft snow and thick mist a descent was negotiated, 'with much use of the compass and a goodly portion of luck,' to the Scott Elliott Pass and thence back to the base camp at Bujuku Lake.

Anyone who has experience of Ruwenzori conditions will agree that this was a tough and daring expedition. If luck was involved, it was well deserved.

Plate II shows the north face of Mount Baker (probably from the Stuhlmann Pass) with Bujuku Lake beneath it. The lower B marks a bivouac on the Scott Elliott Pass, the upper B another bivouac on the ridge. S = Semper Peak. The highest summit of Mount Baker (Edward Peak) lies beyond and is hidden. The German route is marked by the dashed line. Shipton and Tilman made a route up the north face of Mount Baker in 1932, which reached the direct ridge from the Bujuku valley rather to the left of the upper B. (See *A. J.* 44. 93.) This route is not to be recommended according to a private communication to me from Shipton, who has kindly marked the approximate line (white dotted line).

The route shown on the extreme left of the picture is that followed by Firmin and Neylan in 1953. They reached the ridge by a gully between the prominent peak on the left and a lesser one behind and to the left of it. They traversed round the prominent peak and rejoined the ridge beyond it and then continued over the whole of Mount Baker with descent by the ordinary route (dash-dot line).

From the lower bivouac the German party seem to have followed the ill-defined crest leading up from the pass as closely as possible and to have encountered very grave difficulties. Again no times are given, but after a start at 9 A.M. the summit ridge appears to have been reached in the late afternoon. By now a storm was raging and an ice cave was hastily dug. Here a bitter night was passed, while snow fell continuously. At daybreak, however, the weather cleared and bright sunshine welcomed the climbers. Even so the climb to Semper Peak and

continuation to Edward Peak demanded all their remaining strength and will-power. It was with difficulty and relief that they at last reached a camp (whereabouts unspecified) where their companions, who had been doing some photogrammetric surveying, awaited them.

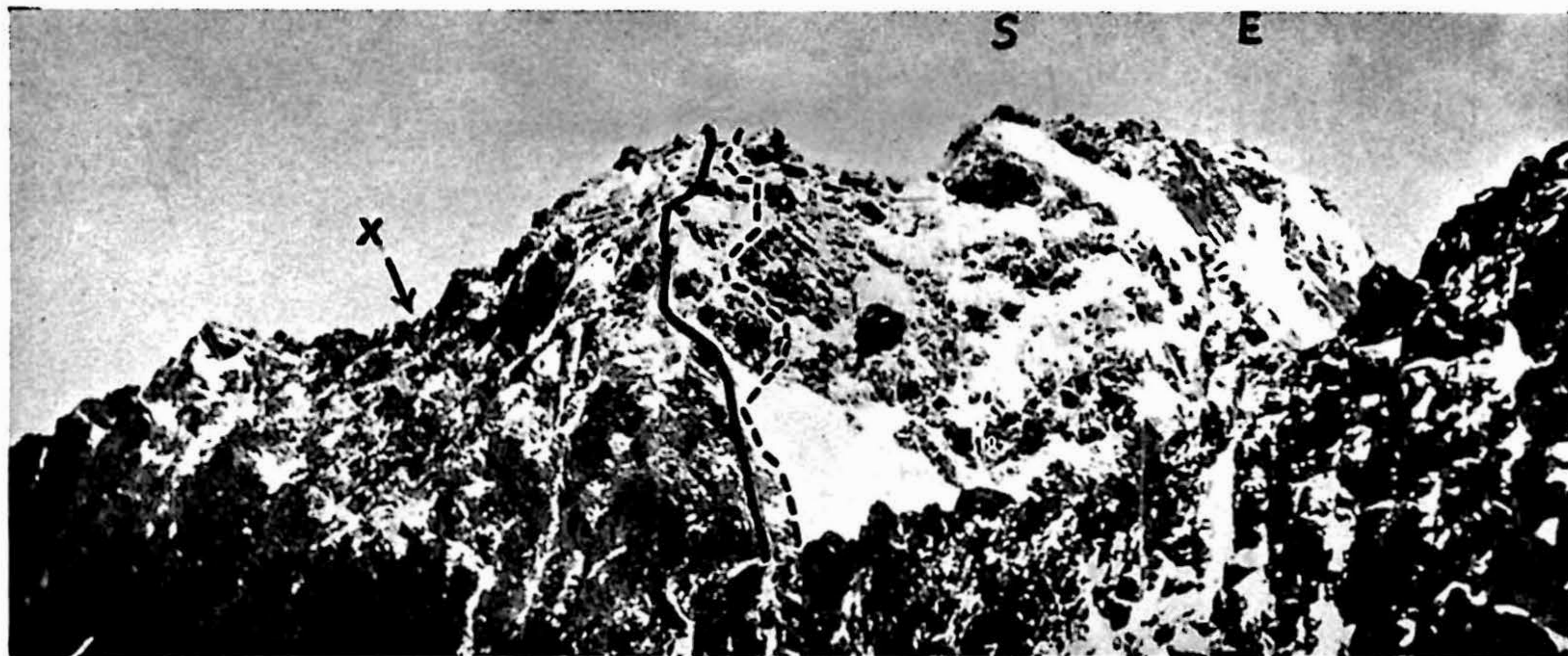
This, too, must have been a severe climb in the conditions described and it is in no spirit of criticism that I suggest that the route was ill-chosen. In 1953 we enjoyed perfect weather and, in ignorance of the 1938 German ascent, I studied the west face of Mount Baker from Ridge Camp. The line from the Scott Elliott Pass, climbed by them, seemed 'obviously impossible,' as so many routes do when seen face on. To the right (south), however, starting below the pass, there seemed to me a route, which even though also face on, was not so outrageous. I do not say that I personally would have tried it, but I was confident at the time that good mountaineers should be able to work it without too many depressing adjectives. It is, however, a fair weather climb and preliminary inspection from Ridge Camp to map out the best line is most desirable.

When I at last made contact with Miss Cameron (see II above) I discovered that this line, or something very close to it, was in fact the one that she followed in January 1938 some days *before* the German party. The ascent was made in good weather in $4\frac{1}{2}$ hours from the pass to the ridge over what are described as 'beautifully steep rocks.' The climb was continued over Semper and Edward Peaks with descent to Kitandara. I have marked the route as a solid line on Plate II. Plate III (from a photo by Miss Cameron reproduced by permission of the Ladies Alpine Club) shows Miss Cameron's route (dashed line to right); I have inserted the German route (solid line to left); S = Semper Peak, E = Edward Peak; both routes start from the Scott Elliott Pass; X = approximate point at which the Shipton-Tilman route (see Plate II) reaches the ridge.

The account of the German expedition is illustrated by a sketch map, stated to be on a scale of 1 : 100,000. As far as it goes it is clear. The survey party later produced a three-colour map on a scale of 1 : 25,000 which is also good, though the base from which they derived their heights is not clear.

IV. THE POLISH EXPEDITION OF 1939

An account of this expedition was published clandestinely during the war in the *Taternik*, organ of the Polish Mountaineering Club, pseudonyms being used for the participants. In 1948 a full account was published in *Taternik* with the addition of an admirable sketch map on a scale of 1 : 50,000 showing the routes followed. The heights are as usual suspect. There are cases of figures being reversed on the map or in the text and also minor discrepancies. I have deposited in the Alpine Club library a copy of a rough translation of the article which runs to some 10,000 words and is somewhat disjointed. Three accounts of



Photo, Una Cameron.]

PLATE III.—MOUNT BAKER FROM ABOVE SCOTT ELLIOTT PASS.
(For explanation of markings, see text.)

the Nyamgasani Peaks must be read in parallel. The following is a summary of the mountaineering activities in the Ruwenzori. The climbers were Messrs. Bernardzikiewicz and Pawlowski. The former was killed during the war.

The party marched up the Bujuku valley to Bigo and then turned north up the Mugusu valley. They camped under the Roccati Pass. This was easily reached and an attempt was made on the ridge from the pass eastwards to Bottego Peak on Mount Gessi. This was foiled by thick vegetation.

A successful attempt was then made by the west face of Bottego. The ridge connecting Bottego and Yolanda peaks was reached in about $2\frac{1}{2}$ hours, apparently without much difficulty, and followed northwards for 20 minutes to the summit (2nd ascent). The ridge was retraced to Yolanda Peak (3rd ascent). A descent was effected by the west face directly to the Mugusu Lake, apparently without great difficulty.

Camp was then transferred to a position to the south of the Cavalli Pass at a height of about 14,230 ft. An attempt on the north-east face of Vittorio Emanuele Peak of Mount Speke failed in bad weather, but next day Pawlowski, his companion being indisposed, made a solitary ascent of the peak by the ridge from the Cavalli Pass, reached somewhat above the pass.

The party then moved to Bujuku Lake and over the Stuhlmann Pass to a high camp at about 13,700 ft. just beyond the pass. From here they climbed up the highest tongue of scree leading to the then unclimbed north-east ridge of Margherita Peak, which was gained at a small col (about 14,900 ft.) just below the first big rise in the ridge.³ This was turned on the right (difficult) and then, after crossing the ridge, by a traverse on the left (south). The ridge was regained by a gully after a cornice had been hacked through (difficult). Some way up the ridge the party bivouacked at about 15,970 ft. The ridge was followed and the summit gained in thick mist on the second day at 2.30 P.M. The climbing time from the high camp is variously given as $12\frac{1}{2}$ or 14 hours.

Albert Peak was reached in 40 minutes and a descent made by the north-west ridge with two rappels. Above the *épaule* of the 1932 Belgian expedition the party turned right on the north face of Albert Peak and bivouacked again at a height of about 14,620 ft. The high camp was regained next day.

From Bujuku Lake the party then crossed the Scott Elliott Pass, camping on the south side and again, after passing the Kitandara lakes, at about 11,250 ft. under the north face of Weismann Peak. Camp was then moved to a site (about 11,200 ft.) due west of Weismann Peak near three small lakes. From here the main ridge was crossed to the Nyamgasani valley by a pass previously used by Humphreys (*G. J.* 82. 6. p. 494) in the reverse direction. The party gave Humphreys' name to this pass, which was not without difficulty for porters. Camp was

³ See Plate I in which the ridge (much foreshortened) is the left-hand skyline.

pitched on the fourth day from Bujuku Lake by the highest of the Nyamgasani lakes (about 13,840 ft.).

From this camp the party climbed two nameless peaks of about 15,250 ft. to which they gave the names of Tatra Peak and Bernardzikiewicz Peak. These lie on the ridge running south from Weismann Peak to Okusoma. The latter was also climbed on the same day. Only Tatra Peak presented difficulties. A col between Bernardzikiewicz Peak and Okusoma was named Bamwanjara Pass after their head boy, who had also been with Humphreys.

The return route of the expedition led back over Humphreys Pass and thence to Hamugoma, over the Freshfield Pass and down the Mobuku valley to Nyinabitaba and Bugoye.

Most of the climbs accomplished appear to have been relatively easy, though the difficulties of route finding in bad weather and a certain reticence must not be underestimated.

The ascent of Margherita by the north-east ridge was in a different category. It has defeated many parties and indeed, until the *Taternik* article was found, it was not known in Uganda that it had been climbed. It is quite distinct, except for the last few feet, from the German climb in 1938 summarised in III above. The Poles did not at the time know of this ascent.

V. MOUNTAIN CLUB OF SOUTH AFRICA, 1953

In February 1953 R. Forsyth and R. F. Davies made a most useful trip. They climbed the Vittorio Emanuele and Johnston Peaks of Mount Speke and it is of interest that, like Humphreys, and Shipton and Tilman before them, they were convinced that the northern peak of Mount Speke, hitherto unnamed, is higher than the Duke of the Abruzzi's Vittorio Emanuele. The point is of little interest to mountaineers, but merits attention by surveyors.

Ascents were also made of Moebius Peak, Alexandra Peak and Savoia Peak. The latter was reached by the gully between Savoia Peak and the Great Tooth, descended by us a month earlier and ascended by Menzies almost to the col in 1952.

The most important route was the north-east ridge of Margherita Peak which, in ignorance of the Polish ascent of 1939 (see IV above), they reasonably enough concluded was a new one. Advised by Bere they did not attempt this climb from the Stuhlmann Pass, but camped at the so-called 'Polish Lakes' (named after the Polish expedition of 1943, see *A. J.* 54. 275, with map). These lie well to the south of the Stuhlmann Pass and west of the Bujuku hut. From the camp a traverse was made to the north to hit the ridge 'as low as convenient.' The ridge was then followed without great difficulty over the big rock step until its junction with the snow ridge (coming up from the left, south) that forms the upper part of the normal route from the Stanley plateau. Four easy hours from camp to summit. There had been a prolonged period of fine weather and at the time the party considered

that in 'normal' conditions the climb would have been more difficult (see below). From Margherita Peak a side trip was made to Albert Peak and back. The descent with some snow storms proved more difficult and two *rappels* were used. The party report that there are no objective dangers and on the ascent no difficulties in route finding. When descending care has to be exercised, particularly in bad visibility, not to leave the ridge too soon by one of the subsidiary spurs.

This route seems to avoid some of the difficulties encountered by the Polish party of 1939, who took the direct line from the Stuhlmann Pass. The South African party missed nothing, in my opinion, by avoiding lichen-covered slabs and vegetation-choked gullies lower down. There is so much of this sort of thing on the approach march to the high peaks of the Ruwenzori that it is not only pardonable but commendable to avoid it higher up—if conditions of visibility permit.

Bere writes to me that the same party repeated this climb in 1954, in 'normal' conditions with much more snow on the rocks and troublesome cornices, as found by the Poles. In such circumstances the ascent was voted much more difficult. I can well believe it; conditions are, I think, more variable and therefore more important in the Ruwenzori than in, say, the Alps.

It should be emphasised that the 1939 Polish and 1953 South African routes, which follow the north-east ridge of Margherita, are entirely distinct from the 1943 Polish route described in *A. J.* 54. 275, *et seq.* This starts from the Polish Lakes (originally named the 'Irene Lakes' after the wives of two of the three members of the party who were still in German-occupied Poland) but it is more of an ice face climb. Moreover, it leads logically to Alexandra Peak, which alone was climbed by the 1943 Polish party, and not to Margherita Peak. Now that the routes are known the 1943 one can probably be considered more difficult in most conditions than those of 1939 and 1953. It may certainly involve icemanship of as high a standard as that required for the Brenva route when the seracs are in difficult condition, but of course it is much shorter.

VI. OSMASTON, 1953-54

Though handicapped by being without a companion, Osmaston did some very useful work in July 1953, which confirmed the topography of the southern end of the Stanley Group.

From Kitandara he ascended the Savoia Glacier to the col at its head, from which he looked down into the upper basin of the Coronation Glacier. Philip Peak, particularly the vertical step on its ridge, was too formidable an undertaking for a solitary mountaineer, but he prospected a route for future use and then climbed the easy snow ridge to the peak⁴ (about 16,100 ft.) at the south-east corner of the Coronation Glacier basin. This looks down on the Elena Glacier and is prominent from Ridge Camp or the Bivouac Hut. He also climbed a

⁴ This is 'Nameless Peak 2' in the photo opposite p. 274 in *A. J.* 59.

lower peak⁵ to the south-east of the above snow peak which is a rock peak as seen from the east. These two peaks lie on the ridge dividing the Elena and Savoia Glaciers and are prominent from Ridge Camp.

Both these were first ascents.

In February 1954 Osmaston, his wife and other companions made a very successful expedition from the north during which various peaks were climbed. In particular the **first ascent** was made of **Philip Peak**. The vertical step on the east ridge is described as only moderately difficult when free from snow, but difficult in the conditions in which they found it. The party were 'slightly struck by lightning' on the summit and renounced their intention of continuing the traverse to Elizabeth Peak and possibly further. The descent in a storm with much new snow was difficult.

⁵ This is 'Nameless Peak 1' in the photo opposite p. 274 in *A. J.* 59.