WITH THE ROYAL AIR FORCE ON DHAULAGIRI IV

By J. O. M. ROBERTS

(Two illustrations: nos. 24–25)

In the autumn of 1962 I visited the west side of Dhaulagiri IV (25,064 ft.) with four Sherpas.[1] Despite the forbidding and unpromising appearance of the lower part of the mountain we managed to find a way through its first line of defences and placed a camp (Camp III) at about 19,000 ft. in an open glacier basin. Across gently sloping snow-fields the final 6,000 ft. pyramid of Dhaula IV rose abruptly from the far side of the basin. At first it seemed to me that the impossible was within grasp, and our small party might, quite contrary to my earlier expectations, reach the summit. I looked first at the South ridge, which runs from the summit of D IV south to Gurja Himal (23,539 ft.). It seemed that the crest of the ridge might be attained by a very steep shoulder, or buttress, of snow and ice, the foot of which could be reached without much difficulty by climbing up a small glacier or ice-fall, which flowed from the southern flank of the West face of the mountain down into the basin. The crest of the ridge, once attained, seemed to offer a perfectly feasible way to the top. But I funked tackling the ice-slopes leading to that ridge with our small party, and we never got started on the route. Instead we turned left or north, at the foot of the West face, at the bottom of a somewhat indeterminate rock buttress coming down from the summit, which I christened the 'Pear' in 1965. Turning left at the foot of the Pear it was evident that a fairly steeply ascending shelf of snow and ice could be followed across and up the northern sector of the West face. Further snow or ice slopes lead round to the north-west and north side of the mountain leaving, apparently, about 2,000 ft. of steeper climbing to the summit. Two of my Sherpas reached a height of about 21,000 ft. on this traverse route. Then we gave up the attempt to reach the summit. Before and after this last event, we all made ascents of a 21,000 ft. peak (probably 21,100 ft.) behind Camp II, which I called Ghustung Himal, after the Ghustung river.

I gave up then, and I think now too easily, because I realised that I had underestimated, in my early elation at having found a way through the lower ice-falls, the considerable time and climbing distance involved by the traverse route. That the shelf might be swept by avalanches was evident. But on the other hand there was little or no visible avalanche debris

[1] See *A.J. 68*. 188-97, and illustrations nos. 7-12 in that volume.

and it had seemed that a speedy passage of the danger zone could be justified. But to camp in it might not, though the actual degree of danger existing was not then, and still has not been, ascertained. The weather that autumn of 1962 was very fine. It was cold, and some days a very bitter and demoralising wind would blow, but day after day was brilliantly clear and fine. We retreated, and later I regretted it. The best way to put things right would, I thought, be to come back another year. There were the two routes, and a possibility of a first traverse of a high Himalayan peak, a feat not yet achieved at that time. As for the next time, these 'one man' expeditions, as the Nepalese press most inaccurately described the 1962 venture, are somewhat expensive for the 'one man', and apart from this it seemed sensible to try and march a stronger party to the foot of the West face and climb the mountain before someone else had similar ideas. So when I came home after the American Everest expedition in the summer of 1963 I had with me a mountain in my pocket.

Stewart Ward of the Royal Air Force had been with us on Annapurna II in 1960, when he had himself achieved the ascent of Annapurna IV. He told me that the Royal Air Force Mountaineering Association was planning its third Himalayan expedition for 1964 or 1965, and asked if I could suggest a suitable and fairly ambitious objective. I could, and, with certain important provisos, did. Thus the Royal Air Force Mountaineering Expedition to Dhaulagiri IV was born.[2] Apprehensive and suspicious of the motives of mountaineers of at least one other country, I pressed at first for an expedition in the autumn of 1964. But this was deemed impossible by the organisers, and we agreed on going in the following spring, 1965. Later this again was slipped to the autumn of that year, but I meanwhile managed to preserve the virgin state of the mountain. It still enjoys that state.

Early on in the planning and preparations for the expedition at my end, in Kathmandu, it was evident that we would have to face a heavy transport bill for moving our over-numerous loads from Pokhara to Base Camp, beyond the village of Gurjakhani, a total of about thirteen days from Pokhara. For some years, owing to food shortages and for other reasons not peculiar to Pokhara or to Nepal, the wage demands of the local Pokhara coolies had been rising sharply until, in 1964, they stood at from Nepali Rupees 17.50 to 15.00 per day for journeys outside the Pokhara valley. In Kathmandu the rate was only Rs. 7.50 per day, and in 1964 expeditions found it cheaper to march Kathmandu Tamang

[2] Leader; J. R. Sims; members: D. R. Bird, P. J. Addis, R. A. Bennett, J. Hinde, T. Mann, W. B. Russell, S. Ward and R. Wilkinson, all of the R.A.F.; and J. O. M. Roberts. Sherpas: Sirdar Mingma Tsering with Nawang Dorje, Nima Tensing (Thame), Nima Dorje, Ila Tsering, Ang Nyima, Tensing Nindra, Pemba Tensing; and 'kitchen boys' Ang Namgial and Sona. Nepalese Liaison Officer: Captain Narbahadur Basnet.

coolies unladen to Pokhara at a fairly nominal daily wage, and then to pay them about 10 rupees a day during the actual carry from Pokhara to base. I had done this in 1962, but that year I did not have to pay them anything for the Kathmandu-Pokhara sectors, and only eight rupees a day for the run to base. By 1965 the Kathmandu men had picked up some tips from their colleagues in Pokhara, and although still cheaper to employ, the final sum, for a thirteen day approach march, came out at about Rs. 13.50 per load per day. And that, multiplied by over 150 loads, is quite a lot of money. As I made these calculations and negotiated, almost one year in advance, with the Tamang headmen I had at the back of my mind the knowledge that there was at Dhorpatan, only four days' walk from base, a landing-strip suitable for light or 'Stol' type aircraft. If we could get ourselves flown into Dhorpatan, I knew we could obtain sufficient porters there, free I hoped of Pokhara trade union influences, to take us to base, if necessary in two or more relays.

I view the use of light aircraft to shorten the approach march to base with mixed feelings. Quite apart from seeing the country, not apparently of great importance to some Himalayan aspirants, the approach march provides opportunity for physical exercise and training, and it gives a party a chance to shake down before beginning actual mountaineering. Also, as Bill Tilman wrote somewhere, the approach march may turn out to be the only enjoyable part of an expedition. As there are now, however, several stol strips in the interior of Nepal, in the vicinity of attractive mountain groups, interest in the use of aircraft, if only as the carriers of food and equipment, is likely to increase among the organisers of future expeditions. And as I am afraid we are not in this paper going to climb much new ground on Dhaulagiri IV, I may perhaps be forgiven for devoting some space to the use of aircraft in the mountains, a technique in which we did obtain some practical experience. I am not dealing here with the use of aircraft on established air routes in Nepal, such as from Kathmandu to Biratnagar, Pokhara or Nepalganj. If they save walking time and transport costs, mountaineers will use such scheduled air services without question. Nor am I concerned with glacier landings or supply drops to stock base or higher camps. These techniques are, of course, widely employed in Alaska and New Zealand, but so far as I can recollect have only been used in the Pakistan-Indian-Nepal Himalayas by the Germans on Nanga Parbat in 1938 (supply dropping only) and Swiss on Dhaulagiri in 1960 (when they left their aircraft on the mountain). Some years ago a somewhat fanciful article by the late Othmar Gurtner appeared in *The Mountain World*, in which the author argued for the use of aircraft or powered gliders in order to stock high camps and thus reduce the numbers of porters to be employed on a mountain. Some of his observations were most intriguing, but of more aeronautical than mountaineering interest. I certainly do not dismiss the possibility

of developments in this field in the future, though whether we shall be the better off for employing a noisy and probably unreliable machine to solve our transport problems above the snowline is open to much doubt. And if there are no Sherpas, who is going to make the morning tea . . . ? In any case the cost of employing an aircraft throughout the period of an expedition is quite beyond the means of most parties coming to the Himalayas, and it will be as well now to return without delay to firmer and more practical ground.

The following airstrips in the mountains of Nepal serve the areas noted. Lukla, below Namche Bazar (Everest region, Khumbu glacier, and areas to east and west such as the Rolwaling and Inukhu valleys): Jiri (shortens the walk to the Rolwaling): Okhaldhunga (shortens the walk to Everest): Jhomoson, above Tukucha in the Kali Gandaki valley (Dhaulagiri, Annapurna I, Nilgiris): Dhorpatan (south side of Dhaulagiri Himal): Jumla (Kanjiroba, Sisne Himal, etc.). At present the availability of suitable types of aircraft in Kathmandu is uncertain, and no party should arrive in Nepal with its plans based on the use of one of these landing grounds without making detailed advanced inquiries about the current availability of aircraft. Nor, for this reason, would it be useful for me here to attempt a detailed costing exercise, comparing flying costs with porter costs, as the capacities of the different types of aircraft which may be available differ. But I can say that the signs are that the aircraft availability situation is likely to improve, and that at current rates it is cheaper to fly food and equipment to Lukla than to carry it there from Kathmandu, and the Kathmandu coolie rates are much cheaper than in Central Nepal, around Annapurna and Dhaulagiri. So, generally speaking, it is probably cheaper to fly expedition loads by charter aircraft (including paying for the aircraft returning empty to Kathmandu or Pokhara) to the locations mentioned above than to carry them there on the backs of porters, and on arrival at the airheads porter wage demands will probably be less than in the areas of greater population to the south.

Given the availability of aircraft, the economics of flying part of the way to base are thus probably sound, and the saving of time may be attractive to those in a hurry. Though, of course, if time is to be saved it will entail all members and Sherpas flying as well, and I cannot myself imagine any mountaineer in his right senses voluntarily foregoing the pleasures of the walk towards the mountains, as a preliminary to a pre-monsoon expedition when the rhododendrons begin to bloom and spring is in the air: or of the walk back to the lower valleys in the crystal air and under the clear, blue skies of the autumn and early winter, as a conclusion to a post-monsoon climb. For myself, I would usually be happy to fly out on the conclusion of a pre-monsoon climb, provided the monsoon had begun and provided the walk being missed by flying was

the same as on the way in to the mountains. There remains the case of getting oneself to base camp for a post-monsoon trip, when the approach is almost always carried out during the last two weeks of the monsoon. Conditions in Nepal can then be rather unpleasant; hot and wet and sticky, and there are leeches. Nonetheless I had a lot of fun during the two long monsoon-end approaches which I have so far carried out, and bad flying weather at this time of the year, say in the first part of September, could play havoc with carefully laid plans and leave an air transported expedition strewn across the map of Nepal. The same weather objection applies to a fly-out at the end of May or beginning of June, though then, apart from such considerations as missed air or shipping connections to one's home, the consequences of delays would be less serious. The conclusion emerges that it will probably be a good thing, during fine weather, to send food and equipment required only for the mountain by air, reducing the transport tail and saving much shouting. Thus freed of care you walk to the mountains and in due course discover your faithful Sherpa sitting waiting, perched on top of the pile of your expedition loads.

Coming back, at last, to Dhaulagiri IV, our transport problem was the last dealt with above—a monsoon approach march or flight. In advising the leader of the expedition, John Sims, I had to take into consideration the various pros and cons for walking as opposed to flying considered earlier in this paper, and although against flying *to* a mountain on principle I could not dismiss the matter out of hand as during the early summer of 1965 the Royal Nepalese Army had been supplied by the British Government with three Scottish Aviation Twin-Pioneer aircraft for troop and freight carrying duties. The Twin-Pioneers had a fair stol performance, and one had done a test landing at Lukla when brought over from the U.K. for demonstration purposes at the end of 1964. There was initially a good deal of doubt about the regulations attending the use of these aircraft for other than military and official duties, and because of this, and because the monsoon of 1965 had been particularly bad and wet, I came to the conclusion that there were too many 'ifs' and doubts regarding their employment. As the Kathmandu coolies, if we walked, had to be arranged two weeks in advance of our departure from Pokhara, a last moment upset of flying plans, for weather or other causes, would result in a serious delay in reaching base. I had hardly, however, posted a letter to Sims to say that we ought to plan to walk from Pokhara, when my hand was forced by the arrival of a letter from the President of the R.A.F. Mountaineering Association, Air Marshal Sir Christopher Hartley, to the Commander-in-Chief of the Royal Nepalese Army requesting the use of the Pioneer aircraft to fly the expedition into Dhorpatan. The Commander-in-Chief kindly gave orders that one or more of the aircraft should perform this duty, and, in view of our Service

connections, at concessional and very moderate charter rates. Although our budget had been stretched to cover the increased coolie rates, 'stretch' was the operative word. Some of us regretted missing the full approach march, and looking back now, I think it would have been a useful exercise. But the generous offer of the use of the aircraft transformed a very strained financial situation into a comparatively comfortable one, and it was an offer that we could not afford to turn down. The decision taken, our problems became more clearly defined. The use of the Kathmandu coolies was set aside and I began to plan the fly-in so that even if the weather caused a serious break in the continuity of the seven different flights or sorties that would be required, progress towards, and if necessary up, the mountain could still be maintained. And we consoled ourselves with the thought that a very heavy monsoon often presaged an early ending.

The party arrived in Kathmandu on August 25 and 26 in a R.A.F. Argosy aircraft, and we began that busy and always exciting period of last preparations before leaving for the mountains; adding up lists, shopping with the Sherpas, distributing shiny new equipment and clothing, and farewell parties. On September 3 we flew from Kathmandu to Pokhara in two flights in a chartered Dakota aircraft, and on the 4th Ken Hart of the R.A.F. (attached to the Royal Nepalese Army for flying duties) brought one of the Pioneers into Pokhara. The weather was quite fine, and I was able to show Machapuchare to my new friends. The next morning was providentially absolutely clear, and this was fortunate as Hart had not landed at Dhorpatan before, and in bad weather it is both difficult and dangerous to find. I went in on the second flight. There was hardly a cloud in the sky as we sailed along the length of the Dhaulagiri range. We landed smoothly after a 40-minute flight, and the members of the first lift all bounced about on the ground giving contradictory R.A.F. hand signals to the pilot. Outside the aircraft the air at 9,000 ft. was fresh and cool after the stuffiness of Pokhara in September. The airstrip and surrounding plain were carpeted with small purple flowers and the sky was blue. My principles were forgotten. *This* was the way! True, there had been no 'mule train coughing in the dust' and the abrupt change induced a sense of unreality, but without doubt air travel to the mountains had its compensations.

Despite my elation, I was in a thoughtful mood as I sat in the small shelter already rigged by the Sherpas, drinking tea. I had not previously had the opportunity of doing the flight which I had just experienced, and I had seen an aspect of the Dhaulagiri range from the air, which although I had seen it in distant views from the ground, I had not fully appreciated. When I first properly examined the Dhaulagiri (or Dhaula Himal) range it was from the north, in 1954. In my photographs taken from the north I had ascribed the name Dhaulagiri IV (25,064 ft.) to a big massive,

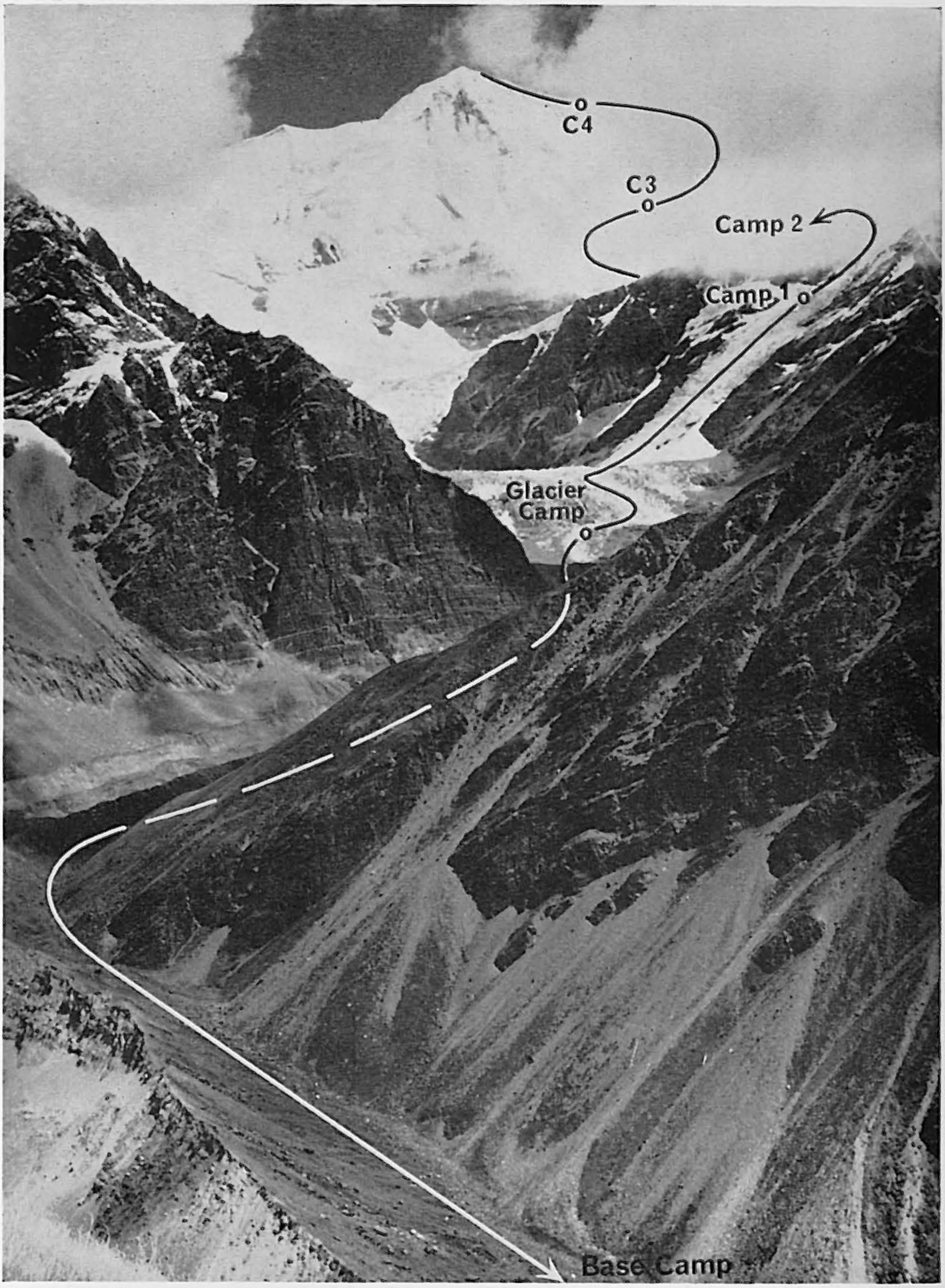
square topped mountain to the west of Dhaulagiri II. The panorama from the north appears as plate 51 of Marcel Kurz's *Chronique Himalayenne* (1959) (taken by G. Lorimer) and also facing page 250 of *A.J. 60.* ('Round about Dhaulagiri'). From the south-east this square topped mountain is also quite distinctive, and I had naturally known it as Dhaula IV, although always having to indulge in some topographic juggling to reconcile its position with Gurja Himal (23,539 ft.), the shape of which was well known to me. I had seen now, from the air, that 'Square Top' was *not* Dhaula IV after all, but quite a distinct and different mountain. The true summit of Dhaula IV was formed by a long ridge of snow and ice flickering north from the huge and lengthy 23,000 ft. bulwarks of Gurja Himal, which in close views from the south-east completely obscure the higher mountain to the north, although Square Top does appear over the shoulder of Gurja Himal, encouraging the illusion that it is Dhaula IV. I naturally felt somewhat deflated by this discovery, and hastened to assure myself that the mountain which we had come to climb, and which I had photographed extensively from the west and south in 1962, was in fact peak 25,064 ft. About this there can be no doubt. But in the identifications to the above mentioned panoramas taken from the north 'Dhaulagiri IV' should almost certainly be amended to read 'Dhaulagiri V' (24,885 ft., not marked as a spot height on the old quarter-inch to one mile survey sheet) and 'Churen Himal' (on the *Chronique* plate) to read 'Dhaulagiri IV'. I can only further conclude that Churen Himal was not visible from the point from which Lorimer and I took our photographs, and that this unsatisfactory muddle can only be settled by an early personal return to the north side of the range.

In Dhorpatan we received much assistance in recruiting porters for the walk to base, and in many other ways, from Herr Schlatter, the Swiss in charge of the camp for Tibetan refugees established in Dhorpatan. He told us that, in contrast to Kathmandu and Pokhara, the monsoon in the area had been a very light one. And indeed the fine weather of the last two days continued and the fly-in of twenty-one bodies and about 10,000 lbs. weight of food and equipment was completed by the morning of September 7. The good weather certainly contributed to the very smooth and efficient execution of this first phase of the expedition, but first and foremost we had to thank the skill of our pilot, Flight Lieutenant Kenneth Hart, who was assisted in all the flights by our own member, V-Bomber Pilot Dickie Bird, who accompanied him as navigator. In our planning we had had to allow for gaps of several days, caused by bad weather, in the flying programme, and Sims was prepared to move the expedition to Base in small parties, as and when a reasonably sized group was collected in Dhorpatan, so as to maintain the momentum of our move onwards and upwards. But now here we all were together in Dhorpatan within three days of leaving Pokhara, and it was only a

shortage of local porters that prevented the simultaneous move of all our loads. As it was, the bulk of the party got away on September 8 with ninety-five porters, mostly Tibetans but with some local Nepalis of the Kami (blacksmith) clan, leaving Bird and myself and a couple of Sherpas sitting on top of the sixty loads which remained. Real monsoon conditions now abruptly returned and the party had a rough time crossing a 15,000 ft. pass in heavy rain, which demoralised the Tibetans. Meanwhile Bird and I had to wait for the return of the porters of the first party and after a couple of days the weather cleared once again. Despite this, the story of the horrors of the first passage to Base—Tibetans strewn around huddled under rocks and sodden loads bursting open (I thought sourly of the number of times I had mentioned the importance of the proper water-proofing of all loads)—had lost nothing in the telling and the cost of carrying one load from Dhorpatan to Base in four days had risen rather sharply from thirty-two to fifty rupees. Bird and I consented with somewhat ill grace and left with our own caravan on September 15. We arrived in Base rather smugly with all our loads intact and in perfect weather, four days later.

Base Camp was established at a height of 13,200 ft. about one mile downstream from the snout of the Dhaula IV West glacier. It was rather far from our mountain, but as far as we could hope to take local porters and there was neither wood nor water (apart from the surface melt on the glacier) beyond. The ferry of loads to what we called Glacier Base or Glacier Camp at 15,500 ft. (the Camp I of 1962) at the foot of the first ice-fall was in full swing when Bird and I arrived, and continued for the next week. When I went up the glacier for the first time I was struck by the dryness of the conditions compared to 1962. The lower part of the mountain looked bare and dirty, and in need of a good coat of snow. I need not have worried.

During all the months of planning I had been constantly bombarded with questions regarding the ending of the monsoon, as if I could forecast the precise date the clouds would recede. I replied with some authority, stating the events which heralded the ending—a great storm lasting twenty-four hours or longer, and snowfall down to about 13,000 ft. Needless to say that now the weather expert was there in person this irritating and often sarcastic interrogation continued unabated. On the whole the weather remained fine: there were storms, but despite my anxious gazing into the clouds the snow refused to fall lower than about 15,000 ft., and only lightly. Fine weather really did seem to become more or less established on September 25/26, and although not fully convinced that the correct signs had been manifest I decided to cut out further idle talk by announcing the official end of the monsoon. Thereafter the appearance of a cloud larger than a football produced a spate of funny remarks which I soon learnt to ignore. But it was a strange year,



Expedition photo]

DHAULAGIRI IV FROM THE WEST, SHOWING ROUTE ATTEMPTED IN 1965. GLACIER CAMP AND CAMPS I, II (JUST OVER THE ROCK RIDGE) AND III (C. 21,000 FT.) WERE OCCUPIED, AND THE PROPOSED SITE OF CAMP IV ON THE FINAL RIDGE IS SHOWN.

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and the weather conditions were to rob us of the summit. After about the 26th a fine spell did begin, but there was no really settled feeling in the air and within about ten days, by October 6, the weather began to deteriorate, though at first without becoming noticeably bad. Cloudy afternoons slipped into days of afternoon snowfall and finally came the exceptionally heavy and all day falls of October 18, 19 and 20, which buried the tents even at Base and extended far down the valley below Base.

But I anticipate. Above Glacier Base lay the first climbing problem, an ice-fall about 500 ft. high. In 1962 I had avoided a direct ascent by using easy rock slabs on the right, facing up, of the fall. This route was, however, open to danger from ice-avalanches coming off the flank of what came to be known as the 'side glacier', and between September 26 and 28 Mann and Wilkinson, with Sims in support, worked out and fix-roped a new way through the centre of the fall. Above this the route to Camp I at 17,600 ft. went up the side glacier falling steeply from the flank of Ghustung Himal, and was substantially the same as that used three years earlier, but was rather more icy and more complicated owing to the drier conditions underfoot and more open crevasses. However, once established, and until the coming of the bad weather in mid-October, the route was safe for unroped climbing, and above Camp I more open slopes led to Camp II at 19,000 ft. beyond the rim of the upper basin of the West glacier (Camp III in 1962). The route to I was first pioneered by Mann and Wilkinson and Sims, followed by the bulk of the members and Sherpas, on September 29 and was fully stocked during the following days. Mann and Wilkinson went through to the site of Camp II without loads on October 3, on which day Addis, Bennett and Hinde occupied I for the first time. These three did a carry to II the following day, and the camp was finally first occupied by them and Ward and myself on October 5. We were now at our Advanced Base and could look to the problems of the way ahead, while at the same time assisting Sims and the others, working from below, in shifting loads from I to Advanced Base. Bennett was not well, and went down to Glacier Base and we were deprived of his technical climbing ability for the rest of the expedition. Another and earlier casualty had been Tensing Nindra, potentially one of our strongest Sherpas. He had developed pneumonia at Glacier Base and although he recovered under the care of our Medical Officer, Bill Russell, he could take no part in the events on the mountain. On about October 6 the weather began to deteriorate and while, as I have said before, it was not exactly bad compared to, say, unsettled spring conditions, it certainly was quite unlike the settled period which normally comes after the end of the monsoon.

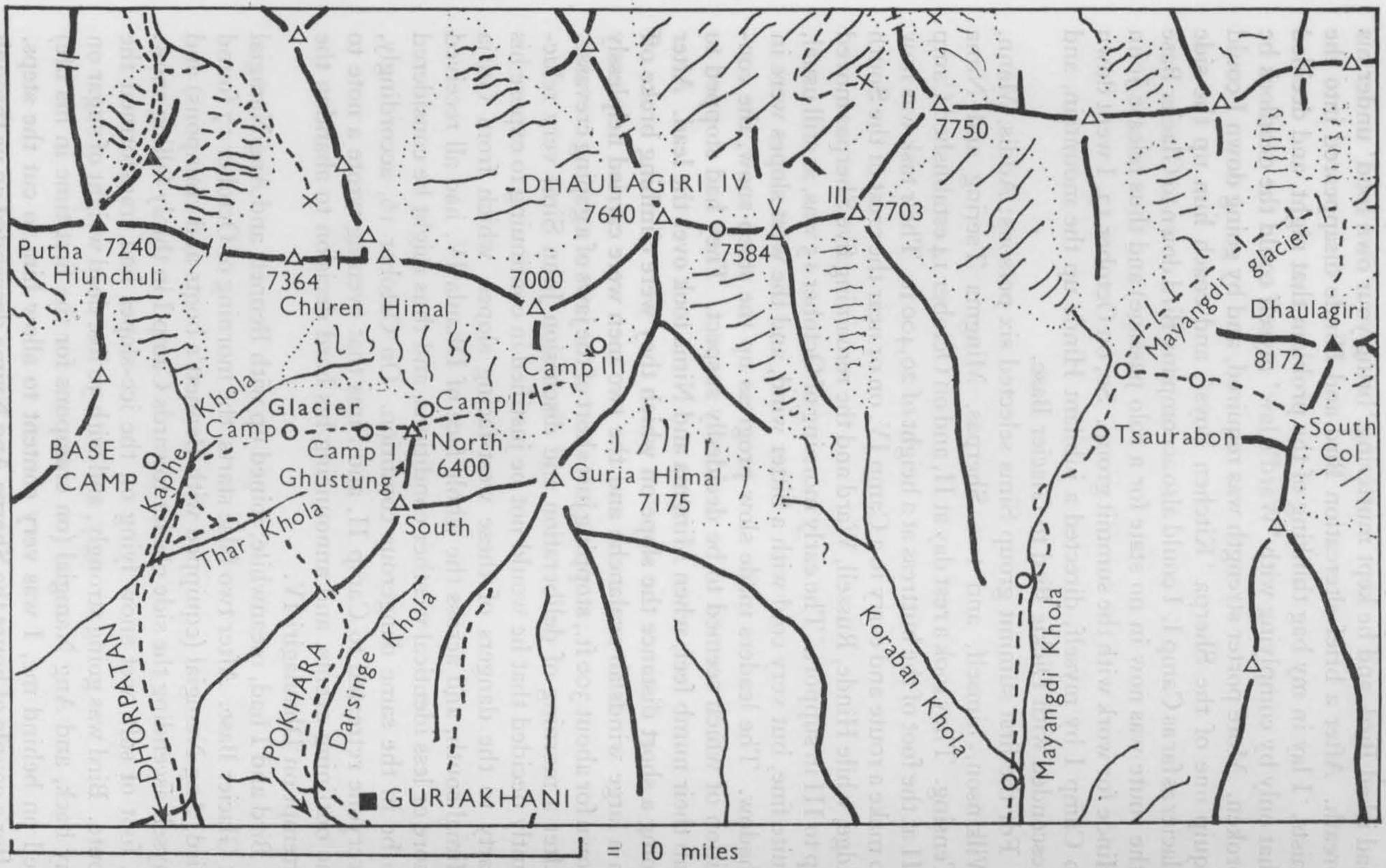
On October 7 Ward and I did a carry up from Camp I while Peter Addis and John Hinde made a pioneering sortie across the glacier basin to the foot of the 'Pear'. Watching them, after our return to Camp II,

Expedition photo]

DHAULAGIRI IV: A NEARER VIEW, SHOWING PART OF THE ROUTE ATTEMPTED.

we were surprised at the poor progress they were making, and later became concerned at their non-return to camp. Addis came in at last and reported Hinde in a state of near collapse, still some distance from camp. A party went out with a thermos of hot soup and Hinde was assisted into his tent as darkness fell. Hinde had not been feeling well and had not been eating properly for some days, and Ward informed him the next morning that it had been an unwritten law on the 1960 Annapurna II expedition that anyone who had been off his food for over two days should descend to Base. (This 'law' must have been kept from me in 1960, otherwise I would not have spent more than three days above Base Camp.) After a period of indecision Hinde rather grumpily stuffed a sleeping bag into his rucksack and started down the mountain. On this day Stewart Ward and I made an attempt to reach the summit of Ghustung for purposes of photography and to examine the traverse route across the West face, which is mostly hidden from Camp II. We made heavy weather of very trying conditions of breakable crust over deep snow underfoot, and turned back in 'white out' conditions at about 20,500 ft. No photographs were taken or important observations made. The following day the toilers lower down the mountain, now established at Camp I, carried up to II and announced that the top unclimbed 6,000 ft. of the mountain was a 'piece of cake'.

So the work continued while the weather conditions worsened. On October 10 I did a carry up from II, and noted that I was 'feeling fine'. On October 11 Addis, Ward, Nima Tensing and I set off across the basin to try and reach the site for a Camp III, at the foot of the buttress route onto the crest of the South ridge. From Camp II the foot of the Pear looked deceptively close, and the descent, and re-ascent out of the basin, involved was not more than 400 ft. But under bad and untracked snow conditions this two mile walk across easy névé fields could be a real killer. Addis and Tensing climbed up the glacier coming down from the buttress to a height of about 20,000 ft. while Ward and I stopped 500 ft. lower. The return across the basin that evening just about killed Ward and me, though we managed to avoid 'doing a Hinde'. The rest of the party, less Bird, Hinde and Bennett, were now established at II, and the following morning Sims led all apart from Ward and myself off across the basin on a first carry to Camp III. I was no longer feeling fine and Ward was nursing a bad headache. Bird and Hinde came up from I in the afternoon snow-squall, and Hinde, now fully recovered, advised Ward to go down to base. Ward grunted a rude reply into his large beard. It transpired now that there had been some miscalculation about the food required at Advanced Base and quite a lengthy shopping list, including 30 lbs. of sugar, had reached Bird at Glacier Base, together with a note to the effect that there were no Sherpas available to carry it, and a final tailpiece 'if you want to come to Camp I, bring your own food'.



Part of Dhaulagiri Massif, showing 1965 expedition's route in from Dhorpatan, camp sites, and route out to Gurjakhani.

As Camp I inevitably lay on the route to II from G.B., this last remark had irked Bird, and he kept muttering 'bring your own food' under his breath. After a brief altercation Bird and Hinde disappeared into the mists. I lay in my bag thinking of the problem that night, and decided that only by complying with 'Ward's law' myself could the deadlock be broken. More porter strength was required, and by going down I could equip one of the Sherpa 'Kitchen Boys', and coach him up the side glacier as far as Camp I. I could also accompany Bird down to Glacier Base (the route was now in no state for a solo passage) and thus release John Hinde for work with the summit group. So, on October 13, I went down to Camp I by myself, directed a jubilant Hinde up the mountain, and descended with Dickie Bird to Glacier Base.

For the first summit group Sims selected six persons; Addis, Mann, Wilkinson, himself, and two Sherpas, Mingma Tsering and Nima Tensing. They took a rest day at II, and on October 14 established Camp III at the foot of the buttress at a height of 20,400 ft. Their task was now to make a route and carry to a Camp IV, on or near the crest of the South ridge, while Hinde, Russell, Ward and the remaining five Sherpas moved up to III in support. The early morning of October 15 was, as still usual, quite fine, but very cold with a bitter wind, and the west slopes were in shadow. The leaders made slow progress up the steep snow, the condition of which seemed to be decidedly suspect. They had stopped to rub their numb feet, when Mingma and Nima took over the lead. After going a short distance the slope on which they were climbing broke off in a large windslab avalanche and the two men were carried helplessly down for about 300 ft., stopping just short of the jaws of a gaping crevasse. After a morning of deliberation and discussion John Sims very reluctantly decided that he would not be justified in continuing to expose his party to the dangers of these west-facing slopes, which from Gurja Himal south, and across the whole face of Dhaula IV, had all received more or less identical weather conditions, and thus might be considered to be in the same dangerous condition. On October 16, accordingly, everyone retreated to Camp II, and Sims that evening wrote a note to me outlining events, and announcing his hard decision to abandon the attempt on Dhaulagiri IV.

Bird and I had, meanwhile, joined up with Bennett and Ang Namgial at Glacier Base. After two false starts, the morning of October 17 found Bird, Ang Namgial (equipped with Bennett's boots and crampons) and myself ascending the side glacier towards Camp I in thinly falling snow. A foot of soft, wet snow lying on the ice-slopes had transformed the route. Bird was going strongly, and with 30 lbs. dead weight of sugar on my back, and Ang Namgial (on crampons for the first time in his life) tied on behind me, I was very content to allow him to cut the steps. After a couple of hours the Sherpa Ang Nyima descended on us through

the now thickening falling snow. He had Sims' letter of the 16th with him. I had for some time been wondering if my journey was really necessary, and after reading Sims' letter I became convinced that it was not. In any case I now had work to do below, preparing to extract the expedition from Base. So I dumped the sugar and Ang Namgial's load of food and descended with him. Bird still hoped for a try at Ghustung Himal and went on up to I with Ang Nyima.

On October 17 Peter Addis and John Hinde climbed Ghustung in bad conditions, and Trevor Mann and Robin Wilkinson did it again the following day in even worse conditions. On the afternoon of the 18th a heavy snow fall began which continued all night and throughout the 19th. The party made an abortive attempt to leave Camp II on October 19, but turned back a couple of hundred yards from camp, where a snowslope which had to be traversed was ripe to avalanche. On the 20th it was still snowing hard. A rope was now fixed so as to avoid the dangerous traverse, and somehow or another the fifteen men managed to climb, slide, slip, slither and plough their way down to Camp I, and on down to the foot of the side glacier, where they spent a miserable night without food or fuel. October 21 dawned fine and sunny, and they went on down the ice-fall to Glacier Base. They were lucky to be all alive.

I met Sims at Base Camp on October 23 and heard these details. The following day I started down the valley with two Sherpas to make a track over the 15,000 ft. pass over to Gurjakhani and to arrange for porters to take the expedition out of Base Camp. The conditions were incredible. We fell into waist-deep drifts where we had walked on dry grass at the same time of the year in 1962. But after some days of sunshine and melting the evacuation was carried out without too much difficulty. We were all reunited on November 6, and we reached Pokhara on the 11th.

What of the future on Dhaulagiri IV? I am still convinced that a way exists on the west side of the mountain which can be negotiated in fine weather regardless of underlying snow conditions. In October, 1965, in the period immediately after the monsoon, there was bad weather owing to a westerly disturbance. Although mornings were mostly fine, the afternoons were cloudy and the west-facing slopes of the mountain received no sun and the snow did not consolidate. Even so, if the weather had remained reasonably fine in the mornings, like normal spring conditions, it might have been possible to devise some sort of a safe route to the top from the west side. But whatever the rights or wrongs of the decision taken on October 15, the westerly disturbance boiled over on the 18th and the subsequent heavy snowfall put paid to any further operations for, I would say, at least ten days. Despite some sunny days after October 21, the weather did not really settle until November 6, when a period of about six weeks of crystal clear days began. Other parties who, like ours, have in the past been hit by disturbed October

conditions have sometimes ascribed their failure to the fact that no break occurred between the monsoon and the 'winter snows'. But these October or early November falls are not the winter snows, which usually come later in the year, and there is nearly always a long, unbroken spell of fine weather in the period after the monsoon. The period may, of course, come too late to be utilised for high climbing because of cold and wind, and even given the equipment to withstand such fine 'winter conditions' it is unlikely that a party planned to make its summit bid in October can remain in the mountains until mid-November.

Conditions on those west slopes of Dhaula IV may be safe in the pre-monsoon period, as I think they probably are in a normal, fine post-monsoon. However I must finally add that I do not think that even given safe snow conditions the climbing of the upper part of Dhaula IV will be technically a snow-slog, as some of the party seemed to think, possibly having been misled by the foreshortened view of the buttress from Camp III. True, we had seen from the air, during the fly-in to Dhorpatan, that the crest of the South ridge looked quite negotiable. But the buttress leading up to it is steep, air views can be misleading and, after all, there are 5000 ft. of mountain still left to climb.