
Nepal 1989

A V SAUNDERS

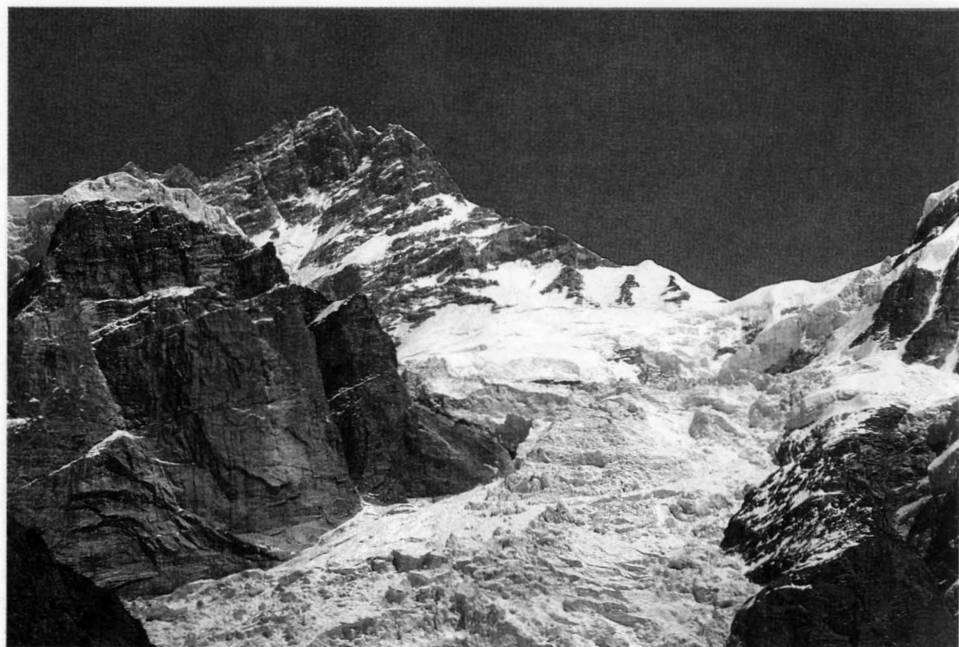
(Plates 25-27)

These notes have been arranged in (more or less) height order. The intention has been to report developments and first ascents completed during the year, rather than to list repeat ascents of existing routes.

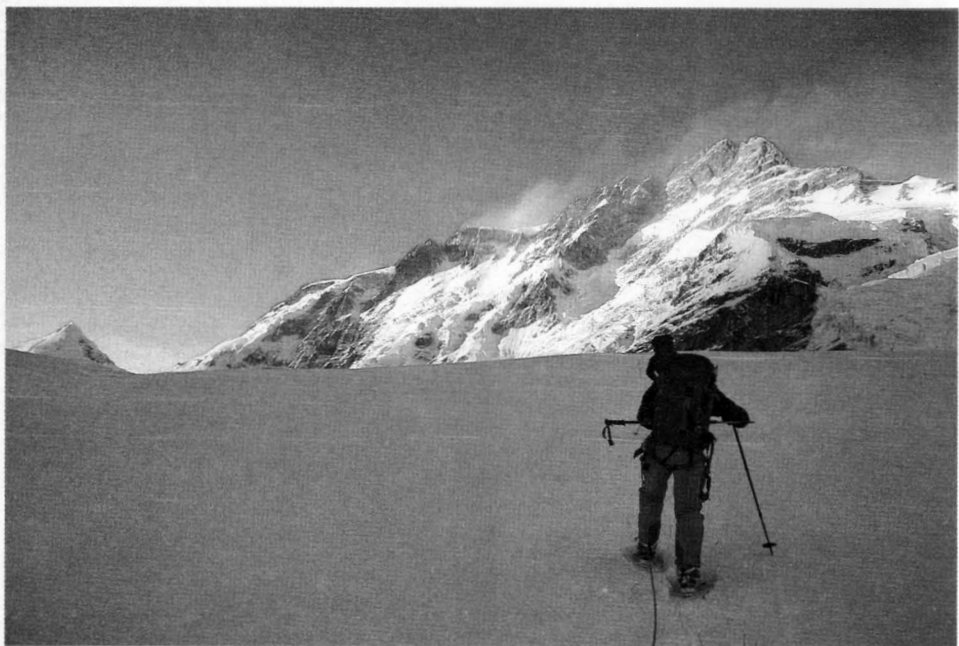
1989 was not a good year. There were few new routes, and several fatalities. On Everest (8848m), reports of overcrowding have become commonplace; this year they have been linked to outbreaks of viral flu. As if this were not enough, there are now perennial arguments about the fixing of the route through the Khumbu icefall. Apparently the earlier expeditions who set up a route often demand payment from the following expeditions who use the route.

During the spring season, the Polish expedition organized by Eugeniusz Chrobak followed a variation on the W ridge route, avoiding the normal Lho La approach. Following a line with minimum avalanche danger, the team climbed Khumbutse (6640m) before descending to the Rongbuk glacier, where they established Camp 1 at 5850m. The line continued left of previous ascents to gain the W shoulder. Five more camps were established on the ridge and in the Hornbein Couloir. On 24 May Chrobak and Andrzej Marciniak reached the summit. Over the next two days they descended, stripping the camps with the help of two other team members. They reached Camp 1 in deteriorating weather to join another team arriving from base. The next day all the climbers set out for base, up the 600m fixed ropes over Khumbutse. At 1pm the six climbers were struck by an avalanche which broke the ropes. Miroslav Dasal, Miroslav Gardzielewski and Waklaw Otreba did not survive the avalanche. Zygmunt Heinrich died shortly after, and Chrobak expired during the night. Marciniak crawled alone down to Camp 1. He was badly injured and snow-blind, but he found a radio and maintained contact with Janusz Majer in Base Camp. Majer radioed Artur Hajzer in Kathmandu, on his way home from Lhotse S face. The Russian embassy in Kathmandu made the necessary diplomatic arrangements with the Chinese (the borders were still closed after Tiananmen Square), and at midnight on the 29th an international team of climbers crossed the frontier. On June 1, Hajzer, Sherpa Zangbu, Sherpa Shiwa, Rob Hall (NZ) and Gary Ball (NZ) reached Marciniak, now without food and little hope of survival. In the autumn a special funeral expedition reached the Lho La (6026m) but found no trace of the five victims. A funeral mass was said and a symbolic burial service performed. Two commemorative tablets were fixed, on the Rongbuk glacier moraine and at Everest Base Camp.

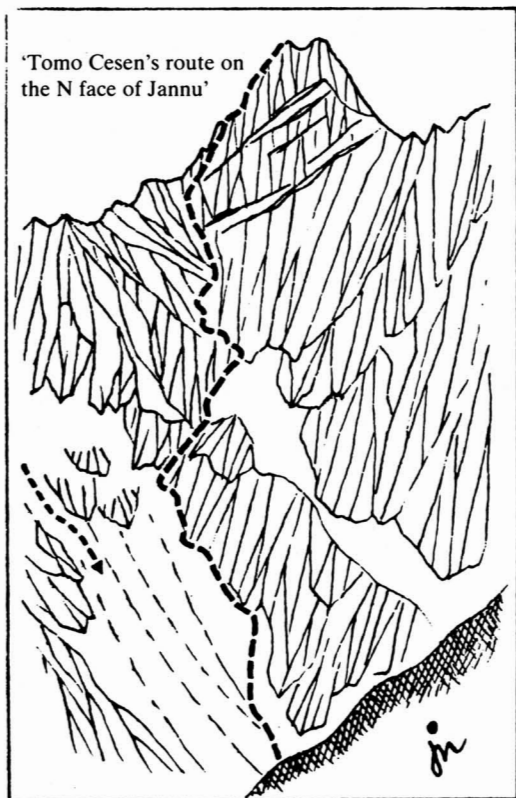
A 30-member Soviet team, supported by 17 Sherpas and led by Eduard Myslovski, accomplished a clean sweep on **Kangchenjunga** (8586m). They completed the first full traverse of all four major summits, in both directions,



25. *Manaslu S face.* (Alan Hinkes) (p 242)



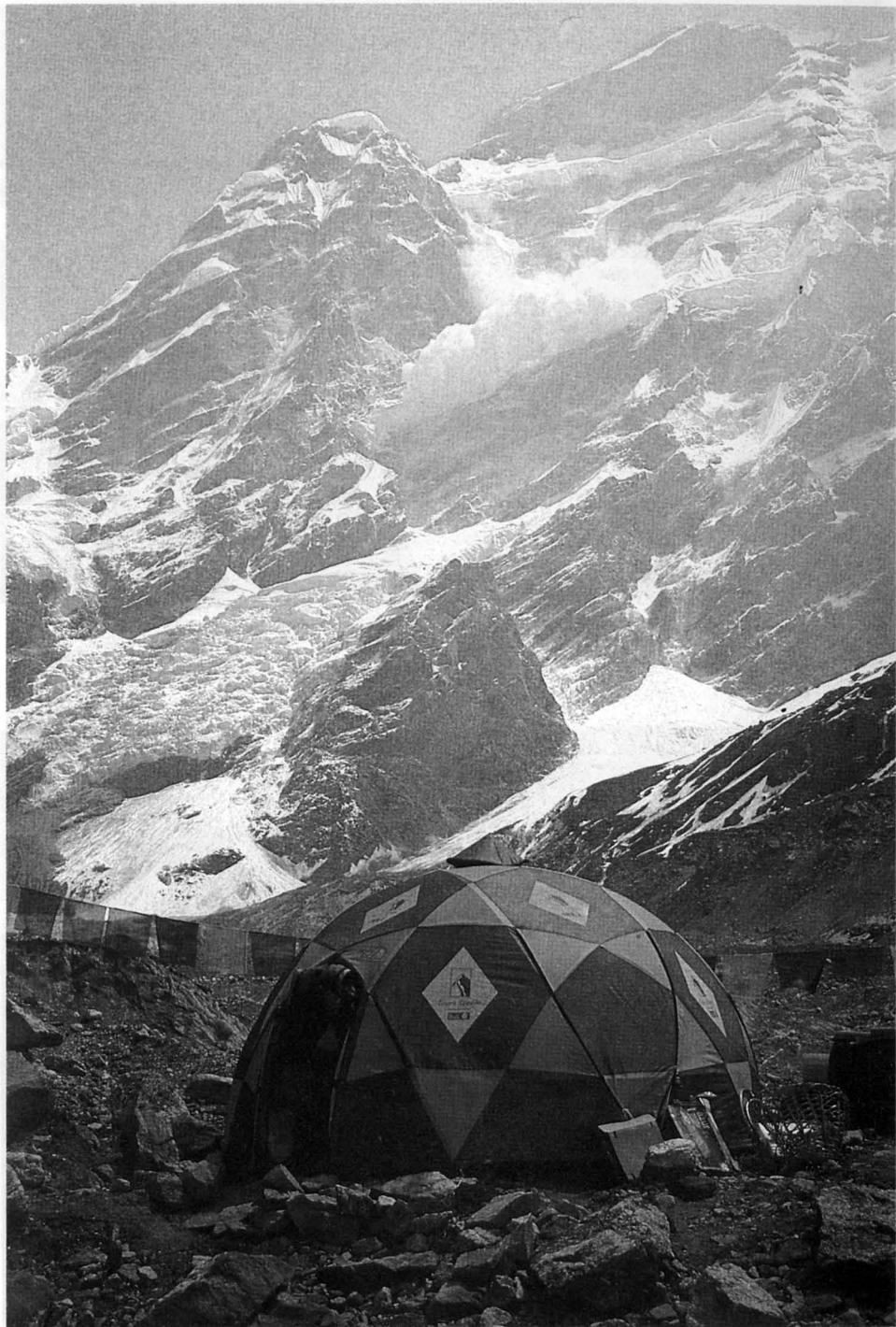
26. *Manaslu S face from 5500m – high winds on the summit.* (Alan Hinkes) (p 242)



and added new routes to the Main Peak and the difficult (IV-V) South Peak. A number of the ascents, though none of the traverses, was done without oxygen, and all summits were reached with the aid of fixed rope. Six camps were placed above the Great Shelf, and three more at or near the summit ridge. The main summit was climbed on 9 April. The other ascents and the establishment of the high camps continued until all was set for the traverse. Starting early on 30 April, a five-member team led by Sergei Bershov traversed the four tops from Yalung Kang (8505m), reaching the S peak at 2.45pm on May Day. They met the second team traversing in the opposite direction on the saddle between the S and central summits. The Soviets made a total of 85 individual ascents in this, their second Himalayan outing. For a fuller account of this expedition, see p24 of this volume.

During the 1989/90 season, a Korean team made the first winter ascent of Yalung Kang via the SE face. Jin Kyo-Sup, Ang Dawa Sherpa and Tshering Tshemba Lama made radio contact from the summit but failed to return, and are presumed to have fallen down the N face.

On Lhotse (8516m) the year began with Messner's international team attempt on the S face. They followed a variation to the right of the Polish route, thought to be safer, but failed around 7200m. In the autumn Jerzy Kukuczka



27. Expedition Manaslu – avalanche off P29. (Alan Hinkes) (p 242)

and Ryszard Pawlowski followed the Wielicki-Hajzer route to bivouac on 23 October, in fine weather, at 8300m. The next morning Kukuczka fell from the top of the first pitch of the day. His body was recovered at 5400m two days later, and he was buried there in a crevasse. Pawlowski had no rope, the 6mm line had broken just above the belay at what is thought to have been the only runner, and he was unable to reach the tent at Camp 6 that night. Without a head-torch he did not know that he was only metres from the camp. Pawlowski completed the difficult descent without injury. During the following winter both Marc Batard and Christophe Profit failed to solo the S face.

There were two remarkable solo ascents this year, by Tomo Cesen and Pierre Beghin. Beghin's effort was the result of a French expedition to the S face of **Makalu** (8463m). Beghin, Michel Cadot (physician) and rock-star Alain Ghersain fixed the route to 7000m, with Camp 1 at 5800m and Camp 2 at 6600m. The route varied from the 1974 Yugoslav line above about 6000m, taking a direct open couloir to join the top of the icefields below the first band of cliffs. Beghin left the top of the fixed ropes alone, and rejoined the Yugoslav line at about 7200m. After some extremely hard climbing and two bivouacs he reached the summit at 2.45pm on 6 October. There were very high winds and he spent little time on the summit, descending the normal route to 7800m, where he was swept on by a windslab avalanche. He lost an axe, but landed safely 200 metres lower at the Catalan-Spanish Camp 3 where he spent the night. The next day Beghin missed the fixed ropes to the Catalan-Spanish Camp 2 and descended the couloir below the Makalu La, where he again fell victim to a windslab avalanche. This time he went 400 metres, lost his other axe, goggles, hat, camera, radio and the remaining contents of his pockets. He reached Camp (6000m) that afternoon, and his Base Camp the next day. Beghin is a scientist specializing in avalanches.

On 12 May, Alan Hinkes became the first Briton to climb **Manaslu** (8163m), following the W ridge, as part of the commercial *L'Esprit d'Equipe* expedition.

From **Cho Oyu** (8201m) there are bizarre reports that a Frenchman and a Belgian were attacked with fists and sticks by six Sherpas and three Koreans, while sharing (?) the same route. The Frenchman received a head wound and had a rope tied round his neck. According to the report, the Europeans later escaped under cover of dark. Meanwhile Cho Oyu is becoming increasingly popular. On 19 September two Catalan women, Monica Verge and Magda Nos, reached the summit with Sherpa Ang Phuri; they are the first Spanish or Catalan women to climb an 8000m peak.

Tomo Cesen's solo effort took place during the spring on **Jannu** (7710m). On 28 April he completed a 23-hour first ascent of the impressive N face. His route was 2700m long, and of increasing difficulty. The final 500m were compared by Cesen to the overhanging N face of the Cima Ovest. It would be hard to be oversuperlative about this climb.

A British expedition completed a new route on the W face of **Makalu II** or **Kangchuntse** (7640m) to reach the subsidiary S summit (7600m) on 26 September. (See 'Chaos', pp17-23 of this volume.) A team under the leadership of Franc Pusnic (Yugoslavia) is reported to have completed the first ascent of the

1600m N face of **Gangapurna** (7455m) on 20 September. The climb was a three-day push by a single pair. During the winter season Michel Thodoroff led an expedition which made a new route on **Kanjeralwa** (6612m), while first winter ascents were made of **Langtang Ri** (7205m) and **Langshisa Ri** (6427m). David Etherington (UK) and Jörg Schneider (DDR) completed the ascent of the E ridge of **Taweche** (6501m).

An international team led by Steve Bell (UK), Russell Brice (NZ) and Paul Bayne (Australia) made the first ascent of the SW ridge of **Himalchuli West** (7540m). Three camps were set up and 3500m of rope was fixed on the ridge which involved rock of grade IV and a vertical ice-step.

On **Nuptse** (7855m) there were two notable efforts. A German team climbed the NW ridge as far as the NW summit (7742m) on 2 November; and an Italian-Canadian team climbed the SE pillar to 6900m, following the Lowe-Twight route past the 1986 high point.

The **Thyangboche Monastery**, the spiritual home of the Sherpa people, was totally destroyed by fire on 12 January. Sir Edmund Hillary has launched a restoration fund: 'The Monastery is a World Heritage site, and it must be rebuilt. We hope that all Himalayan mountaineers will help to rebuild it.' Donations, please, to: Thyangboche Restoration Fund, PO Box 10-274, Christchurch, NZ.

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