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Nepal 1995

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The mountains of Nepal continue to attract large numbers of mountaineers although the draw of the 8000ers and Everest in particular remains the main attraction. Increasingly, expeditions to the higher peaks are multinational and commercial, an almost inevitable consequence of very high permit fees. There was an increase in the number of expeditions climbing Everest from the north. During the year 137 expeditions were active on Nepalese peaks, as well as on the Tibetan side of border peaks such as Everest and Cho Oyu. For British mountaineers there were some significant firsts on Everest, Makalu and Cho Oyu.

Freak, heavy snowfall during November led to a large number of deaths amongst trekkers and local people throughout the mountain regions. In the Khumbu a large party of Japanese trekkers were avalanched at Pangka just below the lakes at Gokyo, and a similar situation occurred in the Kangchenjunga region. Throughout Nepal more than 50 people are known to have died and other lone trekkers are feared missing. Over 500 people were air lifted to safety – a feat only recently made possible by the privately-run Russian helicopters now operating in Nepal.

Spring Season/Pre-Monsoon

Ama Dablam, 6812m John Cleary and Dave Bridges summited via the SW ridge on 25 April.

Annapurna I, 8091m, North Face Route One of the most significant accomplishments of the pre-monsoon season was the first continuous ski descent of Annapurna. A Slovene expedition, led by Tone Skarja, established Base Camp on 12 April. The six Slovene members were joined by Croatian Stipe Bozic and Mexican Carlos Carsolio. Throughout poor weather conditions they established four camps at 5100m, 5800m, 6600m and 7400m. The last camp was placed by Carsolio and Slovene brothers Andre and Davorin Karnica from where they summited on 29 April. The Slovenes skied from the summit taking seven hours to cover the 3700m of descent to Base Camp. Carsolio followed on foot, reaching Base Camp the same day in under eleven hours. On 6 May Tomaz Humar also reached the summit by the same route.

Baruntse, 7129m, SE Ridge A German expedition led by Renate Link was successful on 19 May. Andreas Dittrich, Florian Engert and Dirk Mathess reached the summit.

Cho Oyu, 8201m, NW Side The mountain was busy during April and May, with 45 ascents by Slovenian, German, Austrian, Mexican, Argentine, Swiss, French, Japanese, American and British climbers. Several of these expeditions were commercial, Cho Oyu representing a relatively easy 8000er for 'mail order mountaineers'. In particular, an American group led by Eric Simonson put 15 climbers on the summit during a fine spell in May! Also during May, UK climbers Paul Walters, Iain Peter (Guide) and Norman Croucher summited. Croucher, now aged 54, is the first double amputee to climb any 8000m peak.

Dhaulagiri I, 8167m, NE Ridge Four members of a Russian expedition led by Dimitri Botchov reached the summit on 9 May, including Miss Anna Akinia. Five days later, four more members climbed the mountain.

At the time, a multinational group led by Norbert Joos were also climbing the route. Mexican Carlos Carsolio reached the summit on 15 May. On 17 May Swiss Renate Schmid and Mario Kofler climbed the mountain and on 19 May Joos, Ennemoser, Braschler and Hammann were successful.

Drangnag-Ri, 6801m, (First Ascent) E Ridge A Norwegian/British expedition led by Arne Naess made the first ascent of this fine mountain. Chris Bonington, Pema Dorje, Lhakpa Gyalu, Ralph Høybakk and Bjørn Myrer Lund reached the summit on 30 April. (*For full details see 'Drangnag-Ri', pages 77-82.*)

Everest, 8848m, South Col, SE Ridge A commercial group led by New Zealander Rob Hall (Guide) were successful when Lobsang Jangbu Sherpa reached the summit on 7 May.

Everest NE Ridge Two members of a Japanese expedition and four Sherpas reached the summit on 11 May. This was the 200th ascent of the mountain.

Everest North Col to North Ridge This side of the mountain was blessed by fine weather and lower costs than the Nepal side, making it very busy, not to say confusing. Twelve expeditions were climbing the mountain at the same time, with separate groups reaching the top on the same day having roped up with someone from another expedition – an interesting situation.

A Russian/North Ossetian group led by Kazbek Khamitsayev put three climbers on the summit on 11 May and five more on 13 May, including Everest veteran Ang Rita Sherpa. A Polish-Italian group were successful on both 12 and 13 May, although it seems that several climbers teamed up in this case with a commercial group led by Henry Todd (UK) who had climbers reaching the summit on 12, 14, 17 and 23 May, when British climber Crag Jones reached the summit with Dane Michael Jorgensen.

Two members of a Taiwanese expedition, plus three Sherpas, reached the summit on 12 May. A multinational, commercial expedition, organised by UIAGM Guide Russell Brice, included several high profile members. On 13 May Alison Hargreaves reached the summit, having climbed the mountain unaided and without oxygen. (See *'Everest Unsupported'*, pages 9-14.) Her magnificent achievement was followed on 17 May by Romanian Constantin Lacatusu and on 26 May by Greg Child with Karsang Sherpa and Lobsang Temba Sherpa.

Meanwhile on 14 May a Latvian/Italian expedition made two separate ascents of the mountain during the day. First up was Italian Reinhard Patscheider, followed later in the day by Latvians Teodors Kirsis and Imants Zauls. However, between the Italian and the Latvians had slipped seven members of an American/Australian team including Australian George Mallory, retracing the steps of his famous ancestor. (See page 352 for details.) That same expedition put six more members on the summit on 16 May. Between times an ascent was made by Frenchman Luc Jourjon and Babu Tshering Sherpa on 14 May, both members of a commercial expedition led by Jon Tinker. This group also put a Russian and a Turk on the summit on 17 May. Tinker's highly successful expedition had further success on 24, 26 and 27 May, with a further ten climbers summiting.

A few days earlier an Austrian expedition led by Willi Bauer had success when Josef Hindling reached the summit on 14 May, having found space behind the Latvians. An American/Peruvian expedition meanwhile put Tony Tonsing (US) and Tamang Musal Kazi on the top on 16 May.

Maintaining an accurate record is made more difficult by the fact that at the same time climbers were active on the Nepalese side of the mountain, climbing the now relatively quiet and highly expensive South Col route.

On 15 May a joint American-Argentine-Indian expedition put two members and three Sherpas on the summit.

During May and April a total of 74 climbers reached the summit of Everest, including climbers from Britain, Nepal, Russia, Japan, Poland, Italy, Brazil, Denmark, Taiwan, Romania, Australia, Latvia, France, Turkey, Ireland, Austria and Argentina. I am not sure whether there is a moral to all this – although I did find relative solitude on the summit of the Matterhorn last August.

Lhotse, 8516m, West Face On 6 May Australian Michael Groom and Finn Veikka Gustafsson climbed the West Face. On 10 May Keith Kerr (UK) and Brent Bishop (US) with Sherpas Kipa and Danu reached the summit.

Makalu, 8463m On 7 May French climbers Benoît Chamoux and Pierre Royer climbed the NW ridge.

On 8 May the route was repeated by a Spanish/South Korean expedition. Four members reached the summit. Australians Mark Auricht and David Hume also reached the summit. Hume, the leader of the Australian

expedition, died in a fall during the descent. On 9 May Spanish climber Alberto Zerain was successful.

An ascent of the mountain was made by the same route on 18 May by Rob Hall (NZ), Ed Viesturs (US) and Veikka Gustafsson (Finland). Twelve days before, Gustafsson had been on the summit of Lhotse!

A Japanese expedition led by Tsuneo Shigehiro climbed the NE ridge to the plateau east of the Makalu La and then, via the NW ridge, to the summit. Four members reached the summit on 21 May and four on 22 May.

Manaslu, 8163m, NE Face Three members of a German expedition led by Holger Kloss reached the summit on 7 May. Manaslu maintained its reputation for seriousness after two members were killed in separate falls.

Taweche, 6501m Mick Fowler and Pat Littlejohn climbed a difficult new route up the NE Pillar right of the Lowe/Roskelley line. Technical climbing and uncomfortable bivouacs were features of the route. The summit was reached on 29 April. Descent was via the SE ridge. (*Full details in 'Taweche North-East Buttress', pages 68-76.*)

Autumn/Post Monsoon

Ama Dablam, 6812m, SW Ridge One of the most popular and accessible peaks in Nepal, attracting an increasing number of commercial expeditions. The SW ridge offers delightful, objectively safe climbing on both rock and ice. Camps 1 and 2 are restricted, especially Camp 2 on the Yellow Tower. Fixed ropes often drape the fine, almost horizontal lower rock ridge.

Seventeen expeditions were active on this route during October and November, with 70 climbers known to have reached the summit. British climbers reaching the summit include Alan Burgess, Alison Palmer, Simon Yates (twice), Robin Barley, Joseph Davies, Mark Rogers, Richard Rogers, Anthony Morris, Henry Todd and Keith Howlett.

Annapurna III, 7555m, West Ridge A Japanese climbed the W ridge from the south. Tsutomu Saito, with Tsuldin Dorje and Gyalzen Sherpa reached the summit on 2 October to make the 10th ascent of the mountain.

Baruntse, 7129m, West Pillar A Russian expedition led by Sergei Efimov made a fine route on the West Pillar, reaching the summit on 11 October. They descended by the easier SE ridge.

Cho Oyu, 8201m A large number of commercial expeditions were active on Cho Oyu climbing the W side from the north. A total of 14 expeditions put 76 climbers on the summit, taking the total number of ascents to 192.

Cholatse, 6440m This stunning Khumbu summit received its 13th ascent on 26 October, when a French expedition led by Paul Robach climbed the difficult N face.

Dhaulagiri I, 8167m, NE Ridge Nine expeditions tried this route. Six were successful, putting a total of 26 climbers on top and bringing the total number of ascents of the mountain to 86. There were expeditions from Japan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Bulgaria, Belarussia, Austria, Holland, France, Spain and Italy.

Everest, 8848m Three South Korean teams attacked the mountain from north and south. On 14 October Jo Yong Il and Zangbu Sherpa climbed the North Ridge via the North Col. A Sherpa was killed in a fall. An attempt on the NE Ridge, led by Lee Dong Ho was unsuccessful and abandoned after a Sherpa was killed in an avalanche in September. The same expedition were successful on the North Ridge, also reaching the summit on 14 October. Not to be outdone and obviously well co-ordinated, the third team, led by Cho Hyung-Gyu, climbed the SW face, also reaching the summit on 14 October.

Gimmigela (Twins), 7350m This little-known peak received its third and fourth ascents by a large Japanese/Nepalese expedition on 16-17 October via the W ridge, climbed from the N side. 17 climbers reached the top.

Kangchenjunga, 8586m Six expeditions attempted the mountain via the SW face to the W ridge. Swiss climbers Erhard Loretan (on his 14th 8000er) and Jean Troillet (on his 8th 8000er) reached the summit on 5 October. On the same day, the well-known French climber Benoît Chamoux disappeared on the mountain having reached 8545m. (*Further details on pages 57-58.*) On 14 October, Italians Sergio Martini and Abele Blanc reached the summit.

Lhotse, 8516m, West Face On 27 September Spanish climbers Alberto and Felix Inurrategi with Onchu Lama made the third ascent of the mountain, followed on 2 October by Juanito Oiarzabal, Juan Vallejo and Um Hong Gil (Korea).

Makalu, 8463m, SE Ridge An international expedition led by Daniel Mazur climbed the mountain on 9 October by the SE ridge. Four climbers reached the summit: Daniel Mazur (US), Alex Nikiforov (Russia), and British climbers Jonathan Pratt and Andrew Collins. This was the first British ascent of the mountain. (*See article 'Hidden Peak 1994 and Makalu 1995', pages 61-67.*)

Pumori, 7161m Swiss, Italian, American, German, Czech, Austrian, British and Greek climbers were active on Pumori, climbing the standard SE ridge and face to the E ridge. A total of 25 climbers reached the top.

Tsokarpo Kang, 6556m In West Nepal there was some activity in the Kanjiroba Himal and an Anglo-American group led by Jeff Tabin made the second ascent of this peak via the SW ridge. Other members of the same group climbed the SE face on 1 October, making the third overall ascent.

Trekking Peaks

On 'Trekking Peaks' there were several important new routes which point to the full potential of these low-budget, low-bureaucracy objectives. Two Slovene teams were active in the Annapurna Sanctuary, achieving outstanding solutions to some well-trying problems. (See article 'Trekking Peaks - By any Other Name', pages 189-191.)

Hiunchuli, 6441m The 1200m high NE face of Hiunchuli has been the scene of several attempts. After two reconnaissances, the team of Tadej Golob, Dusan Polenik and Tomas Jeras completed a difficult ascent to the summit of the lower East Peak (6005m), albeit placing fixed ropes on the lower difficulties.

The most technical, lower section of the route was fixed with rope. On 11 October the final ascent began late in the day (3pm). A 50m ice barrier and difficult séracs in the middle of the face presented the technical crux. Climbing throughout the night, they reached the East Summit at 8am on 12 October. Dangerous snow conditions prevented them reaching the main summit and descent was via the ascent route (7 rappels and down climbing). The route was named *Terra Nostra*.

Singu Chuli, 6501m (Fluted Peak) Commanding the centre of the Sanctuary, 'Flutter', first climbed by Noyce and Cox in 1957, received a rare ascent via an important new route by Slovene climbers Bojan Počkar and Ziga Petrič.

Their route climbs what is often referred to as the South Face but in fact is angled East-South-East and is made up of the characteristic 'fluted' snow and ice that led Jimmy Roberts to call it 'Fluted Peak'. The face is 1450m high with an average angle of 65° and is a complex snow and ice slope of narrow couloirs overhung by a barrier of séracs.

Climbing through the night, their pure Alpine-style ascent began at 9pm on 6 October from a camp (5000m) on the glacier below the face. Their route lay up increasingly steepening ice, below threatening séracs. The last six pitches were mixed involving VI+ rock and 90° ice. The summit was reached at 3pm on 7 October. The route was named *Perun* after the Slovene God of Thunder, Fire and War. Graded Alpine ED.

Pisang Peak Scene of a tragic avalanche accident in the 1994 post-monsoon season, Pisang Peak, 6091m, (Manang Region), was the scene of another climbing accident last autumn. Four members of a 20-strong Slovene trekking group, having crossed the Thorong La, attempted the relatively straightforward Pisang Peak. Descending from the summit unroped, Drago Zlof slipped and fell 700m to his death. It was his birthday.