

**Seasonal Stories
for
the Nepalese Himalaya**

2005

by Elizabeth Hawley

Spring 2005: Inaccurate Forecasts Cause Many Failures on Everest

Swiss Climber Ueli Steck Solos Tawache Face

Two Men Claim to Have Reached Their 14th 8000ers

Once upon a time—a decade ago—everyone knew the period of good weather for summiting Everest was between the 5th and the 15th of May; commercial expedition leaders set the 6th to the 10th as their target dates. Then later in the 1990s the weather pattern seemed to push the favorable period to later in the month, to the 18th to 25th. Never so late as June—until 2004, when two Russians made the first June ascent, and that was on the very first day of the month. This year, a number of teams summited in June after weeks of waiting, and didn't leave their base camps until its second week.

The commercial expeditions were back in strength this spring, and many were receiving daily forecasts via satellite from such well-known meteorological centers as Bracknell in England. They wanted to know about impending snowstorms, but they were particularly looking for predictions about wind velocity on Everest, to know when there would be three or four continuous days of gentle breezes. Then they could plan to send their members and Sherpas up into the highest camp for their summit bids. (And not only the commercial teams were closely following the forecasts; the small two-member parties did their best to learn what predictions the others were getting.)

The problem was that the forecasters were constantly getting it wrong, and on the basis of inaccurate predictions, especially for the southern side of Everest, climbers were going up and down the mountain—and even trekking below base camp—like yo-yos, tiring themselves out and becoming increasingly frustrated. Some independent climbers ignored the received wisdom, made their attempts to reach the summit, failed and went home. “If it wasn't snowing, the wind was blowing,” said one who gave up waiting for a break in the weather. Other climbers, both independents and members of larger groups, stubbornly stayed till late in May and early June, and many of these were finally rewarded with success.

On the north side, a few teams summited on the 21st and 22nd of May, then not until the 27th, when they then continued to succeed until the 5th of June. On the south side, no one reached the top until the 30th and 31st of May, the days on which almost all the successes were achieved; others went to the summit on June 2nd and 5th.

However this does not include the claim by a French helicopter pilot, Didier Delsalle, to have taken off from the Lukla airfield near Everest in Nepal, landed his Ecureuil on the 8850-meters-high top of the world on 14 May, stepped out of the cockpit and stayed there for over two minutes before flying safely back to Lukla. The Nepalese authorities denied his claim but invited him to leave the country for breaking rules.

There was a large number of unhappy climbers aiming to reach the top in the normal way on their own two feet. They belonged to the unprecedented total number 101 teams, 49 on Tibet's northern side and 42 on the Nepalese side, and they ranged in size from one-foreigner parties without any Sherpa support to an expedition on the northern side with 27 members with 36 supporting Sherpas and Tibetans.

In the spring of last year, 64 teams went to Everest and only 10 (16%) failed. This year, 101 groups were on the mountain and an astonishing 48 of them (48%) failed to put anyone on the top. There were 326 summiters last spring, but this season only 306 men and women claimed success.

The leader of one of the larger teams, Henry Todd, who relied on Bracknell's forecasts and as a result none of his members summited, said he intended to find out why all the forecasters predicted mild winds when they actually were fierce. He brings expeditions to Everest every spring, and obviously he is not at all interested in a lot more erroneous predictions.

An Australian climber figured out how to beat the weather on the south side: go around to the north. Piers Buck had originally planned to make a traverse from south to north and had permits to do so. He had gotten to only 7500 meters on 16 May and then the weather became unsettled for many days, whereas on the north side people started getting to the top on the 21st. So he left the team he was with on the southern side, flew by helicopter to Kathmandu on the 23rd, and went by road to the north side's base camp. He summited on 5 June as a member of the expedition he had been given permission to descend with.

Another late arrival at base camp on the north side climbed without any Sherpa support or bottled oxygen. Marcin Miotk was on an unsuccessful Polish team to the south face of Annapurna I and returned to Kathmandu in mid-May. But instead of going home he went to Everest, was at base camp on 18 May and made two summit bids. On the first one, he climbed with two Austrians but turned back at 7900 meters on 1 June because of strong wind. The second, he reported, was a success: climbing alone from advance base camp, he was on the top at 2:30 p.m. on 5 June, the very last person of the season to summit Everest.

Amongst those who claimed success were a few whose ascents were some kind of first:

- First Muslim women, Miss Farkhondeh Sadegh and Mrs. Laleh Keshavaz from Iran, on 30 May from the south side.
- First Mongolian, Usuhkbayar Golovdorj, on 30 May also from the south, the first from his land to gain any 8000-meter summit.
- First Bhutanese, Karma Gyeltshen, on 21 May from the north. Unlike Golvdorj, he had no Sherpas with him to the top. There was some speculation amongst other climbers that he had not gotten all the way to the summit: he was a slow, inexperienced climber, and the elapsed time he gave for his final ascent seemed inconsistent with his claim of success.

- First citizen of the Balkan nation Serbia and Montenegro, Iso Planic, on 29 May from the north.
- First black person from any country to scale Everest twice, and to do so from both south and north sides, Subusiso Vilane from South Africa, on 3 June from the north.
- First climber to make his 15th ascent, Apa Sherpa, on 31 May at the age of about 43, from the south. He says he goes to Everest repeatedly because it's a well-paying job he is good at.
- First climber with only one arm, Australian Paul Hockey, on 5 June also from the north. (An American, Gary Guller, who had summited in May 2003, had lost much but not all of an arm.) But Hockey, 42 years old, became so exhausted by his ascent that he had to be helped by five Sherpas to descend from 8700 meters.
- First marriage on the summit: Miss Moni Mulepati and Pem Dorje Sherpa exchanged garlands as she became the first non-Sherpa Nepalese woman to reach the top.

Another summit claimant who may actually not have gotten there was an Indian, Ganesh Padubidre Nagesh Rao (he simplifies his name to P. N. Ganesh). He had no teammates, just one Sherpa with him; from about 8600 meters on 3rd June he made the last part of his ascent alone and, he says, got to the top at about 10:00 a.m. The problem is that the date and time he says he summited, and the nationalities of the people who he reports were with him on the top, were not there, according to the other teams' reports of their own movements. For example, the only other summiters that day were a team of one Briton, one Norwegian, two South Africans and three Nepalese Sherpas, and they had left the summit two and a half hours before he arrived. But he thinks his fellow summiters were Dutch and Spanish plus just two Sherpas, whereas there were no Dutch and Spanish on top that day; he was sure the two Sherpas were with an expedition that actually sent no one to the top until the following day.

As usual, Everest took its toll of lives: three on each side of the mountain, one American, one Briton and one Canadian on the north side, one German, one Indian and one Slovenian on the south. The south side's notoriously treacherous Khumbu Icefall claimed its victims leaving one dead and one with a badly broken leg.

Death struck the American, Michael O'Brien, who became the 21st person to die in the Icefall. He slipped on one of the many big unstable ice blocks, plunged 50 meters down a crevasse and died of internal injuries. He and his brother Christopher had been descending to base camp together; Christopher took Michael's body home.

Ben Webster, a Canadian who knew the Icefall well and had summited Everest in May 2000 via this route, was also descending to base camp when a chunk of ice slipped out from under his left foot. He fell on his side, twisted his leg so badly that it broke in two places below the knee, and was carried or dragged down to base

camp by perhaps as many as 40 Sherpas. He took himself home from Kathmandu on crutches.

One team came to the north side of Everest this spring with the sole purpose of recovering the bodies of compatriots who perished there last spring. Called the 2005 Korean Chomolungma Human Expedition, it was led by the veteran South Korean climber Um Hong-Gil, who brought 11 other Koreans and 18 Sherpas to locate the remains of three men, Park Mu-Taek, Jang Min and Baek Joon-Ho, and, if possible, take them down to the nearest Buddhist monastery at Rongbuk for cremation.

Only one body was found despite a search of a wide area of mountainside: Park was lying on his back, clipped onto the fixed rope at 8750 meters. There were no gloves on his hands, so Um put his own gloves on them “because they must be cold.” The body was brought down to 8600 meters, and there, away from the main trail, stones were moved aside to make space to lay it down; they were then used to cover it completely and to make a small cairn beside it.

It was a miracle that many more people didn’t die on the south side of Everest when a huge avalanche of rock and ice crashed down from the west shoulder on 4 May onto tents pitched at camp 1 just above the top of the Icefall. Very luckily few people were occupying the camp at the time, and those who were there or near it received relatively light cuts and bruises except for one Sherpa whose back was injured. Numerous tents and the gear inside them were completely lost.

On a much happier note, the well known American mountaineer Ed Viesturs went to Cho Oyu to acclimatize and then quickly to his last 8000er, Annapurna I. The north face of this mountain is notorious for its fatal avalanches. Viesturs went to it in the spring of 2000 and witnessed constant avalanching all across the face; he returned from having climbed no higher than 5900 meters and declared he would never go to there again. His next attempt, in 2002, was via the very long east ridge, which he decided was not for him. So now he was back on the north face after all.

This time he and his frequent climbing partner, Vieikka Gustafsson of Finland, already well acclimatized, moved quickly up the face, pitched their high camp at just 6900 meters, waited there three days for the wind to drop, and were on the summit on the 12 of May, less than two weeks after arriving at base camp. Viesturs was amazed by how free the face was from avalanching.

On the summit, he felt it was “a dream come true. I had my doubts that I’d ever get there because of our conservatism [about taking risks] and its dangerous avalanching.” He thinks he is the seventh or eighth person to scale all 8000ers without using bottled oxygen. What next? “Now that I’ve gotten the 8000ers out of the way, maybe some 7000ers in Nepal, maybe Antarctica.” He had no definite plans yet.

Viesturs and Gustafsson left the mountain on 14 May without any avalanche problems—much to their astonishment. On the 18th, four men from an Italian team led by Abele Blanc reached 6300 meters in the same gully the American and Finn had climbed when suddenly huge blocks of ice, some three meters square, came

crashing down. Christian Kuntner, for whom Annapurna was the last 8000er he had left to scale, received fatal internal injuries. Blanc, who was in the lead, was struck on the side of his head so hard that he was unconscious for 18 hours and has no memory of the incident, and two of his ribs were broken. (Annapurna was his final unclimbed 8000er also.) The last two men going up the shallow couloir, Stephan Andres and Marco Barmasse, were not so seriously hurt.

Alan Hinkes, another mountaineer keen to finish the 8000ers, went to Kangchenjunga this spring with the additional objective of becoming the first Briton to scale them all. The mountain received heavy snowfall in April and May, and this stopped a six-member team led by Norbert Joos of Switzerland from going higher than 7620 meters on 13 May, and they decided to give up hope ten days later, citing the dangerous snow conditions. Nevertheless, Hinkes and his Sherpa, Pasang Gelu, stayed on. They re-fixed sections of Joos's ropes, and on 30 May went for the top. Pasang Gelu turned back near the summit while Hinkes pushed on alone and summited just as daylight was fading and new snow was starting to fall. He groped his way down the ropes and almost bumped into his Sherpa in the poor visibility; they managed to get safely back to their tent at 7400 meters for what was left of the night.

The British ambassador gave a garden party in Kathmandu to celebrate Hinkes' success. He certainly deserves credit for summiting Kangchenjunga. But his claim to have now climbed all 8000ers is open to question. In April 1990 he and others reached the summit plateau of Cho Oyu. It was misty so they could not see well; nine years later Hinkes said he had "wandered around for a while" in the summit area but could see very little and eventually descended to join the others, one of whom said they had not reached the top. Hinkes noted six years ago that as a mountain guide he could earn money by guiding a group of clients on Cho Oyu and would do so and make sure to get to the highest of the numerous mini-summits on the plateau. He never went back, but he said again after Kangchenjunga that he can lead a paying group to Cho Oyu. One hopes it isn't misty next time.

Climbers on most of Nepal's other 8000-meter mountains had the same problems with wind and snow and avalanching. No one at all got to the summits of Makalu, Manaslu and Dhaulagiri I. Half a dozen climbers who had planned to go from Dhaulagiri I to nearby Annapurna I immediately dropped that idea when they learned about the ice avalanche that had killed Christian Kuntner. Even on the Tibetan side of Cho Oyu, said to be the least difficult of all routes on 8000-meter mountains, only ten of the 37 teams were successful.

One of the numerous failed Cho Oyu teams was a four-man Japanese party led by Masakazu Okuda. One member was 54-year-old Yoshiki Takeshita, who has been totally blind since the age of 15 and was the first sightless person ever to try to ascend the mountain. He made one attempt to reach the summit with his three teammates and their four Sherpas on 1 May, but they decided to turn back at 7950 meters at 1:00 p.m. because by that time it was too late for them get to the top and return safely at their slow pace to their highest camp.

Takeshita used bottled oxygen from their first high camp at 6400 meters up to 7950 meters. and down to their third camp at 7000 meters, so now there was not enough oxygen left for a second summit push. In any case, he was too tired to try again.

Throughout the period when he was moving up and down the mountain from their arrival at base camp at the road-head on 11 April until their departure on 5 May, Takeshita was led by Okuda, who held one end of a pole and he the other end; Okuda also told him where he had to go next: step up now or turn right.

This is in marked contrast to the only ascent of Everest by a blind person, a 32-year-old totally sightless American climber, Erik Weihenmayer. He was not led by a pole or short-roped, but was guided by the sound of a bell on the rucksack of the teammate ahead of him and by his own feeling and probing with two poles. When he reached one of the mountain's many crevasses, a teammate placed one of his feet on its lip, and he used his poles to judge the distance to the other side—and then jumped. He was on the top of the world on 25 May, 2001.

A Dhaulagiri I team from South Korea led by Ahn Jea-Hong declared they had sent a member and three Sherpas to the summit. But when their summit member Choi Im-Bok described what he had found at the top, a tall metal pole standing upright, it was clear that they had mistakenly gone to only the fore-summit, which looks deceptively like the highest point.

While hundreds of climbers were in the early stages of their wanderings up and down Everest, one Swiss, Ueli Steck, was totally alone on the southeast face of Tawache, not far to the southwest. First he went to the base of the northeast pillar of this 6501-meter peak, but he saw there was too much loose rock falling down the couloir on his intended route, so he went around to the southeast face instead. He started up the face at 11:30 p.m. of the 24th of April from his base at 5200 meters, was on the summit at 8:00 a.m. the next day and soon back in base camp. Just one hour after his return to camp, snow avalanches started coming down the face.

"I didn't pick the perfect route," he commented. "It was dark." He had stayed on the face throughout his climb, but he thinks the best route probably is one leading to the southeast summit and from there traversing to the left along the summit ridge to the highest point.

Mountaineers in the Everest region of Nepal are not bothered by Maoist rebels, but one expedition travelling by road from Kathmandu to the Tibetan side of the mountain had a bad experience. Rebels had declared highways closed for five days in the area which the road passes through. The trekking agency for a large Russian-led expedition and several other teams arranged for the Royal Nepal Army to escort their convoys of vehicles on 7, 8 and 9 April to the border village, Kodari, and all of them reached there without incident.

However the Russian leader, Alexander Abramov, and one of his members, Sergei Kaymachnikov, were delayed leaving Kathmandu on the 9th, so they took a taxi to catch up with the team later. Only about 25 kilometers out of Kathmandu, a small bomb was tossed through the open window in the back of the taxi where

Kaymachnikov was sitting. Its explosion ripped off his heel while some of its fragments penetrated the back of the front seat and slightly wounded Abramov.

An army helicopter quickly flew them to the military hospital in Kathmandu, where Kaymachnikov was treated until he left for Moscow on the 15th. Abramov drove to the border on the 16th, rejoined his team and climbed to their highest camp at 8300 meters.

Also to enforce their will, the Maoists had planted land mines at either end of a small bridge a few kilometers south of Kodari. Here an Everest expedition of Australians and a Dutchman led by Tashi Tenzing, a grandson of Tenzing Norgay Sherpa, had to stop on the 13th and wait for three hours until an army bomb disposal squad detonated them.

Elsewhere Maoists extorted funds from climbers. They charged Joos's Kangchenjunga six-member group Rs.5000 (roughly \$70) per member. Another team, a Georgian and a Russian led by the Georgian, Gia Tortladze, on their way to Manaslu were forced to pay a total of Rs.52,500 (\$745). This charge was calculated by the rebels at Rs.100 per member per day; the climbing permit from the tourism ministry stated that there were seven members on this expedition and it was valid for 75 days. The fact that actually they were only two members was of no interest to the Maoists. Complained Tortladze later, "there are two governments in Nepal: one in Kathmandu and one run by the Maoists."

Autumn 2005: Worst Disaster in Wipes Out French Team
Americans John Roskelley and Son Try Gaurishankar's North Side
Four "Unconquered" Peaks Attempted Unsuccessfully
Only Two Climbers Go to Everest and They Fail

The worst disaster ever to befall an expedition in the Nepalese Himalaya struck a seven-member French team on Mt. Kang Guru. The only previous death on the mountain was that of a West German named Bernd Arenz, who died in a fall on 24 October 1985. Now twenty years later almost to the day, on 20 October, all the French, led by Daniel Stolzenberg and including his wife, and 11 of their Nepalese employees, three high-altitude climbers, base camp cook and kitchen boys, plus low-altitude load-carrying porters, who were in their base camp tents after the members' late afternoon tea, when they were swept by avalanching into a deep gorge below.

All 18 people perished. Several other porters were outside their tents and managed to survive and to trek to the nearest village, Meta, where they met a French-Israeli expedition planning to climb another mountain in the area, Ratna Chuli. This team immediately informed the French embassy in Kathmandu of the disaster. (Because of the snow conditions, the Ratna Chuli team made no attempt to continue to their peak.)

Early rescue attempts to retrieve the climbers' bodies were mostly ineffective. One, that of Bruno Chardin, a ski resort manager, was found before they suspended their search because of continued avalanching. In the meantime French specialists in post-avalanche searches with special equipment and two sniffer dogs arrived from France. By mid-November, when they too called off their work until early next year, the bodies of another member, Jean-Francois Jube, an advisor to the French Ministry of Youth and Sports, and a low-altitude porter, Manilal Gurung, had been discovered.

The previous record death toll on a single expedition in Nepal had been set by a South Korean team on Manaslu. In April 1972 15 men—10 Nepalese, four Koreans and one Japanese cameraman—were killed when a big avalanche struck their tents at 3:15 a.m. But most of the Koreans were inexperienced in the Nepalese Himalaya, whereas at least two of the Frenchmen had been to Nepalese or Pakistani 8000-meter mountains, and all of them lived in mountainous parts of France. Stolzenberg, for example, came from Chamonix, was a professional guide and had been a professor at the prestigious ENSA (National School of Skiing and Alpinism). And they had an experienced sirdar (leader of the Nepalese staff) named Iman Gurung, who had summited Everest twice, most recently in May this year, as well as Cho Oyu twice.

It is easy to be wise after the event, and some people questioned the wisdom of the base camp's location. It was surrounded by 35-40 degree slopes. One porter

reportedly suggested that the camp be moved to what he considered a safer location downhill, but his proposal was not acted upon.

A noted French climbing instructor, Jean Coudray, who came to Kathmandu after he had discussed this subject with previous Kang Guru leaders, noted that the team had placed their base camp at the normal site. “In this area, there is no place for base camp that is completely safe; there is no safer site for it” than the one everyone has used. In any case, “the cost of mountaineering is a little risk.”

Furthermore, he pointed out, there was continuous heavy snowfall for many hours. The resulting avalanching was made of powder snow, the worst kind of avalanche because it travels down a slope of 30 degrees or more very fast—200 or more kilometers per hour—and its “target” is impossible to predict: it can shift direction often. In this case, the avalanching happened to target base camp.

Kang Guru is a 6981-meter mountain in the Manang area northeast of the Annapurna range; it is east of Pisang Peak, which is favored by climbers preferring a lower mountain and less bureaucratic red tape for a permit. In recent years, Kang Guru has been a favorite of some French commercial expedition organizers. It apparently was safe—as mentioned above, only one climber had ever died on the 27 previous teams to Kang Guru, and that occurred two decades ago—and the approach route went through colorful mountain villages.

East of Manang, the noted American mountaineer John Roskelley and his son Jess aimed to make the first ascent of Mt. Gaurishankar from its Tibetan side. The mountain defeated them as it had the three earlier attempts on the north side by Britons in 1964 and Japanese in 1997 and 1998. It stands 7134 meters high south-southwest of Cho Oyu. On a very clear day, it is visible from Kathmandu on the northeastern horizon and was once thought to be the world’s highest mountain until the British Survey of India made more careful measurements. Its first ascent was made by John Roskelley himself in May 1979 from Nepal’s southwest face, the feature that can be seen from Kathmandu. However Gaurishankar is seldom attempted even from the Nepalese side and has been summited only twice since Roskelley’s success.

The Roskelleys were unable to get very far in their efforts on one of its northeast ridge, of which there are several, John reported. The Roskelleys’ ridge turned out to be a ridge of unstable rocks—“like a house of cards.” There were even huge icicles hanging from them. John and Jess gave up at only 5450 meters because of the dangerous rocks that were very difficult to climb, and the difficulties got worse as the ridge got higher.

The only team to attempt Everest this autumn also failed to reach their summit. They were another father-and-son team, Jerzy and Pawel Michalski from Poland, and they abandoned their climb in late September at only 6700 meters, 300 meters below the North Col, their intended site for Camp 1, because of the serious risk of fatal avalanching. Two of their Sherpas had been hit by a soft-snow avalanche while fixing rope just below the Col; they were not seriously hurt, but that was sufficient warning to the Poles.

The last time anyone summited Everest in an autumn season was in 2002, when Marc Siffredi, a skilled French snowboarder, climbed to the top via the standard North Col route on 8 September intending to snowboard down the north face into the Hornbein Couloir. (He had reached the top in May 2001 when he made the first snowboard descent of Everest by the standard northern route.) Then in September 2002 he started down the north face but very soon completely disappeared; no trace has ever been found of him or his snowboard or gear.

Commercial expedition organizers do not send teams to Everest in the autumn. They crowd the mountain in the spring instead because as climbers go higher in the autumn, the weather is turning colder and the daylight hours shorter, whereas in the spring it is getting warmer and the days longer. Furthermore, the period of favorable weather usually is briefer in autumn. The organizers send their clients instead to Cho Oyu and Ama Dablam in September and October respectively, and then it is these two mountains that are crowded.

This autumn, a total of 46 teams were on Cho Oyu, the 8000er, and one more, 47 teams, on 6812-meters-high Ama Dablam. Cho Oyu via its standard route in Tibet is the least difficult of all the 8000ers and appeals to those who want to be able to boast they had been to the top of an 8000-meter mountain, or to others who see the climb as training for Everest. Ama Dablam is a handsome mountain seeming to be almost within touching distance to the hundreds of trekkers who pass by it on their way to Nepal's Everest base camp site, and it does not present the problems of extreme altitude.

The four small teams' who made bids to scale peaks not already climbed successfully were themselves unsuccessful, three of them because of the prolonged heavy snowfall right across the country that tragically wiped out the French on Kang Guru. The three who were stopped by deep snow were Slovenians to Janak in the far northeast, and climbers for two peaks which no one had ever attempted before, Japanese to Pabuk Kang also in the far northeast and three Americans and a German to Swaksa Kang in the northwest. The fourth party, two Canadians and an American, went to Tengkangpoche in the Everest region in mid-Nepal.

The three Americans and one German for the south face of the previously unattempted Swaksa Kang (or Swaska Kang), a 6405-meter mountain in the Kanjiroba Himal range, were led by Peter Ackroyd, who has come several times to obscure mountains well off the beaten track. This season his party were unable even to set foot on the mountain although they made base camps in two successive locations. They put the first one on 17 October near a stream called Swaska Khola; here the problem was the impossibility of finding a route through a glacial area of big over-hanging glaciers and loose rocks underfoot which were covered with snow preventing their seeing what exactly was underneath it.

Two days later they pitched their second base camp west of the stream's valley and farther west across Yala Pass. But now the heavy snowfall began that night and continued for most the next three days. They gave up. They were now running short of food and fuel, and their porters were getting very nervous about this and the deepening snow, which could have landed them in "big trouble," said

member Jim Frush, former president of the American Alpine Club. They encountered another problem away from the mountain: Maoist rebels relieved them of \$200 per member and Rs.2500 (roughly \$35) for their sirdar.

Two Japanese led by the explorer-mountaineer Tamotsu Ohnishi, who specializes in very remote areas along Nepal's border with Tibet, and who now wanted to try the south side of Pabuk Kang, northwest of Kangchenjunga. But they, too, had to abandon their plans to climb the previously unattempted mountain. On 21 October 130 centimeters of new snow started falling kept falling for three days. On the day before, they had pitched their advance base camp just east of Yanmakang Pass, south-southwest of the peak, but went no farther. They too had encountered Maoists. On their approach march to Pabuk Kang, they met five parties of Maoists but paid Rs.2000 or about \$27 per member to only two of them.

The third team who quit climbing because of the snow were two Slovenians on "unconquered" Janak, which stands 7044 meters high, farther northwest from Kangchenjunga than Pabuk Kang but also on the Nepal-Tibet border. It was first attempted in the autumn of 2004 by Romanians. Now the veteran mountaineer Andrej Stremfelj was there with one teammate, Miha Haban. However, before trying to ascend Janak, they acclimatized on Dzanye, a 6870-meter peak farther west along the border. They made two bivouacs above base camp at 4750 meters at Lhonak—their second bivvy was 15 kilometers from base—and succeeded on 12 October via a couloir of 50-55 degree ice leading almost directly to the summit; from the top of this gully on the south-southeast face, they moved up the face and finally at 6770 meters onto the west ridge to the summit. They started down the ridge, but it became so steep they went onto the south face; even here they were forced to rappel down 350 meters to their lower bivouac at 5610 meters for the night. They were back in base the next day.

They now turned their attention to their principal goal, Janak. They had already established their advance base at 5710 meters for this climb and occupied it again on the 18th. The next day they examined the glacier under the south face and on the 20th began their ascent. They climbed a couloir at the eastern edge of the face and dug a snow hole at the top of the face where it joins the southwest ridge at 6650 meters. But they were too late.

The sky had become cloudy that morning and by evening, when they bivouacked, a strong, very cold wind had blown up. They had no sleeping bags or tent with them since they had expected to keep climbing through the night in full moonlight, but the clouds shut out the moon. On the 20th they abandoned their attempt and descended the face in 15 rappels; at 2:00 p.m. they reached their couloir, snow was falling and avalanching had begun on the face. Despite this, they were safely back in their advance base camp at 5:00 p.m.

Tengkangpoche, in Khumbu west of Namche Bazar, is 6500 meters high; it was attempted by seven previous teams, most recently by Britons in the autumn of 2004 and by Japanese in the spring of this year. This autumn it was the turn of two Canadians and an American led by Will Gadd from Canada. Their route was the north face, where they tried two lines on the 29th and 30th of October, but by now

the American member had dropped out because of illness and they were down to two men, Gadd and fellow Canadian Scott Semple. They reached 5200 meters on each line and then gave up on the 30th principally because they had hoped to climb ice but instead found unconsolidated snow on the face, but also because here too there were dangerous avalanches.

The vast majority of fatalities this autumn were suffered by the French team for Kang Guru, but two other climbers died on Annapurna IV and Tilicho—not on the two crowded mountains, Ama Dablam and Cho Oyu, as some might have feared. On Annapurna IV, an Austrian, Alois Schiempfoessl, died of altitude sickness on 14 October, and two weeks later, Josef Kaesbauer, who was German, fell to his death on Tilicho.