



## **Nanga Parbat: Second Winter Ascent, First Complete Ascent of Northwest Face, and Rescue**

Pakistan, Himalaya

Nanga Parbat from the northwest. Red is the upper section of the Mackiewicz-Revol route with Camp 4 marked. (C) is the crevasse bivouac at 7,280m from where Revol descended alone along the blue line (the Kinshofer Route). Google Earth

**A LITTLE AFTER SUNSET on January 25, 2018, Tomasz Mackiewicz (Poland) and Elizabeth Revol (France) reached the top of Nanga Parbat (8,125m) to make the second winter ascent of the mountain.** The pair had completed the first ascent of the northwest face to the summit, with Revol becoming only the second women in history to climb an 8,000m peak in winter (after the Swiss mountaineer Marianne Chapuisat, who climbed Cho Oyu on February 10, 1993). Their ascent was made in very lightweight style.

The northwest face had seen several previous attempts, including a 1991 Austrian team that reached 7,400m and a 2008 attempt that reached 7,760m, not far below the north summit. (See AAJ 2017.) Mackiewicz, a veteran of multiple winter attempts on the mountain, had attempted the northwest face with Revol in 2014-'15 and again the following winter. In 2018, they started along the same line but then angled right, eventually reaching the Kinshofer Route, which they followed to the summit.

After a first foray in early January, in which they reached Camp 2 at 6,600m, Mackiewicz and Revol began their summit attempt on January 20. On the 21st they made it back to Camp 2, where they discovered their tent still intact (the shovel they'd left there had blown away). It was very windy that night and the next day, making it inadvisable to move. On the 23rd, in early afternoon, they began to traverse right toward the Austrian-Canadian route on the northwest buttress (Göschl-Rousseau, AAJ 2010). Violent wind from the direction of Mazeno Pass forced them to stop for the night at a sheltered spot at 6,900m.

On the 24th the pair reached the buttress at 7,000m and then continued up and right, generally following the Austrian-Canadian route. However, at 7,200m Revol suggested that they try contouring right, as much as 200m below a similar traverse followed by Göschl and Rousseau, to hit the Kinshofer Route close to its standard Camp 4. At first the climbing was mixed, then two snowy couloirs were crossed before the two emerged onto the great snow slopes below the summit pyramid. They found a sheltered site for a tent in a crevasse at 7,300m and settled in for the night.

On the 25th they crossed the large plateau, quickly joining the normal line of the Kinshofer Route, and started the final ascent. At 5:15 p.m., with an extensive cloud sea below and the sun dipping down the Mazeno Ridge, Revol used her Garmin InReach to contact her husband and support team in France. She was at 8,035m. When Mackiewicz joined her, they discussed whether to continue, given the lateness of the hour, but both agreed to carry on. They reached the top between 6 and 6:15 p.m.

During the ascent they had been relatively sheltered from the wind, but now they received its full force, making it far too cold for Revol, who arrived first, to operate either her Garmin or GoPro. It was dark, and when Mackiewicz joined her he confessed he could not see Revol's headlamp, which she had

switched on, and that she herself was a blur.

Alarm bells rang for Revol: The lack of vision might have originated with Mackiewicz neglecting to wear protection during the hazy summit day, but it also suggested the onset of cerebral edema. With Mackiewicz hanging onto her shoulder for guidance, Revol headed down immediately. The Pole was not able to move fast enough to keep warm. Partway down the main couloir he took four dexamethasone tablets, and this seemed to improve things for a while. The two continued down the snow slopes below the summit pyramid until about 7,280m. Here they would have needed to make a long traverse and a slight ascent to reach the tent, but Mackiewicz was by now completely exhausted, frostbitten, had signs of pulmonary edema, and was unable to see properly. Revol got them both inside a crevasse for the night, with no bivouac equipment.

Next morning it was obvious that Mackiewicz would not be able to move. By this time Revol had made several emergency calls. She was told that it should be possible to get a helicopter rescue to Mackiewicz, but that she must descend to a lower altitude herself, as it would be impossible to recover two people in a helicopter at this height. Reluctantly, next morning the Frenchwoman decided to descend the Kinshofer Route, on which altitude could be lost faster. Convinced at the time that a helicopter could rescue Mackiewicz, she anchored him inside the crevasse, then cut steps to the entrance so that he could climb out. That day she descended to 6,700m, where she spent the night in another crevasse.

Mackiewicz's wife in Poland, alerted to the situation by posts on Revol's social media, contacted a friend of Mackiewicz, who in turn contacted an official of the Polish winter K2 expedition. The official called the Polish team at K2 base camp and asked if they wanted to help. Expedition leader Krzysztof Wielicki, with his team's blessing, reached out to Polish government officials, who began working with Pakistan's military to coordinate a rescue. Sheltering in her crevasse, Revol knew nothing of this. Exhausted and dehydrated, she began to suffer hallucinations. She perceived that someone was offering her hot tea but in return wanted one of her boots. Revol took off her left boot and only realized this serious mistake five hours later.

A little after noon the next day, the weather in Skardu cleared enough to allow two helicopters and four pilots, led by Lt. Col. Anjum Rafique, to set off for K2 base camp and pick up four climbers, Adam Bielecki, Jaroslaw Botor, Piotr Tomala, and Denis Urubko, to participate in the rescue. These four were flown to Skardu and then on to Nanga Parbat. En route, Rafique made the decision to continue past base camp and try to land at the base of the Diamir Face, as close to the standard Camp 1 (4,900m) as he could. After several attempts, all four climbers and equipment were dropped at around 4,800m.

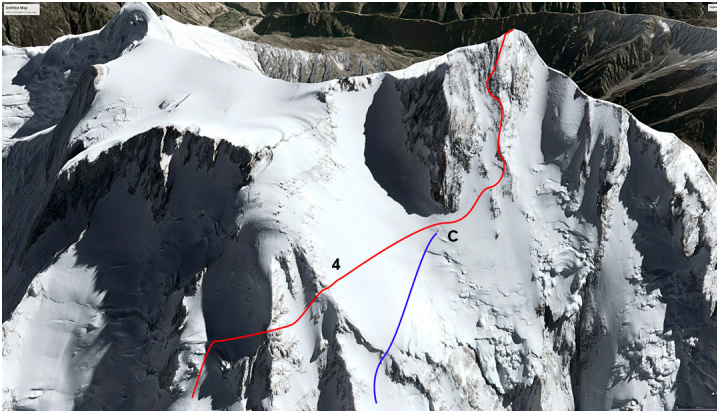
At 5:30 p.m., Bielecki and Urubko, well acclimatized from K2, started immediately up the Kinshofer Route, carrying bivouac and medical equipment, hoping to reach Camp 2 before dawn. Botor and Tomala would set up a support camp at 4,900m. In the meantime, Revol, having given up hope of being rescued from 6,700m, was descending toward Camp 2.

At 2 a.m. on the 28th, having put in a remarkable performance by ascending 1,100m in less than nine hours, aided by finding many useful fixed ropes, Bielecki and Urubko established voice contact with Revol at around 6,100m. They took her slowly down to Camp 2, where they sheltered for four hours in a bivouac tent, administering hot fluid and medicines. The temperature was -35°C and wind gusts estimated at 80km/hour. Although Bielecki and Urubko had originally discussed the possibility of continuing up, in the slim hope that they might be able to do something for Mackiewicz, it was now blatantly obvious that the conditions, a bad forecast for the following days, and a very weak Revol, frostbitten in the hands and left foot, made it imperative that they try to get the Frenchwoman off the mountain alive.

Bielecki and Urubko belayed Revol down the steep Kinshofer Wall and then the couloir below, until all three reached the bottom of the face. From there Revol was able to walk to Camp 1, where, at 1:30 p.m., she was evacuated by helicopter.

– **Lindsay Griffin**, with information from Elizabeth Revol, Rodolphe Popier (Himalayan Database), Eric Vola, Kyrzstof Wielicki, Piotr Packowski, and Maj. Gen. Muhammad Khalil Dar.

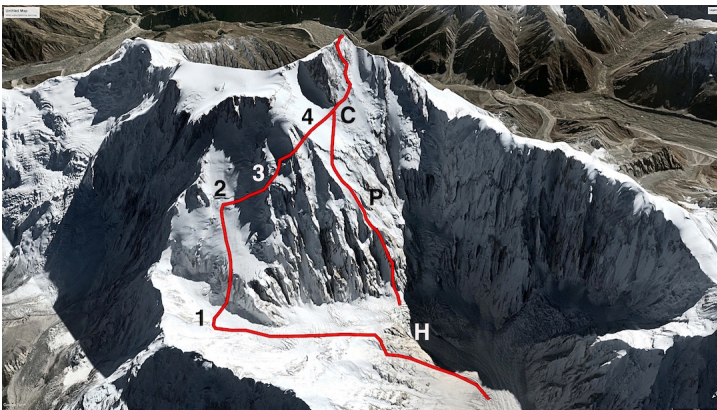
## Images



Red is the upper section of the Mackiewicz-Revol route with Camp 4 marked. (C) is the crevasse bivouac at 7,280m from where Revol descended alone along the blue line (the Kinshofer Route).



Nanga Parbat from the west. The red line shows the Mackiewicz-Revol ascent, with camps 2, 3, and 4 marked. The lower section of the route is hidden by Ganalo Peak. As far as Camp 2, they generally followed the line of past attempts on the northwest face; from there to Camp 4, they were on or near ground that mostly been climbed before, but they were the first to link the northwest face to the main summit. The blue line is the standard Kinshofer Route. (C) is the crevasse bivouac at 7,280m used on the descent. The long arête falling right from the summit then curving toward the camera is the Mazeno Ridge.



Nanga Parbat from the northwest. Red line shows the Mackiewicz-Revol route up the northwest face and traverse to the upper Kinshofer Route, with camps 1 to 4 marked. As far as Camp 2, Mackiewicz and Revol generally followed the line of past attempts on the northwest face; from there to Camp 4, they also were on or near ground that mostly been climbed before, but they were the first to link the

northwest face to the main summit. (C) is the crevasse bivouac at 7,280m where Mackiewicz stayed after the descent from the summit. From there Revol continued down the Kinshofer Route (yellow line). (R) marks the approximate spot at 6,100m where Revol was found by Adam Bielecki and Denis Urubko. (H) marks the general area where the Polish were dropped off to begin the rescue.

## Article Details

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