



## **Cholatse, West Face, Just One Solution**

Nepal, Mahalangur Himal, Khumbu Section

Looking east at Makalu (left) and Cholatse, showing (1) northwest ridge (1988), (2) Just One Solution (2023), (3) West Rib (2023), and (4) Southwest ridge (1982). Photo by Zdeněk Hák.

**Radoslav Groh and I planned to climb a new route on the west face of Cholatse (6,423m).** As part of a larger group of Czech climbers, we first acclimatized on Lobuche, then tackled Cholatse's normal route on the southwest ridge (Clevenger-O'Connor-Roskelley– Rowell, 1982). However, on October 25, one of our members, Jan "Honza" Ross, died in a long fall from the ridge. After this, the expedition returned to Kathmandu. After consulting with family and friends, Radoslav and I decided to return to the mountain to see if we could find Honza's camera, which his family wanted, and hopefully attempt our new route.

On November 1, we bivouacked 200m above Cholatse's base camp at 4,900m. Studying the west face, it is obvious the objective danger is significant. There is icefall on the lower part of the face, rockfall from the middle, and just below the summit a guillotine of overhanging seracs. There seemed only one solution: We would split the ascent into two days and seek a safe place to shelter during the heat of the day.

Early on the 2nd, we climbed three pitches of steep ice and mixed at WI4+ M5. Above, four pitches of easier terrain led to an ice cave at 5,400m on top of a prominent serac. We reached this point at 10 a.m. and then sat out the rest of the day, protected from overhead danger.

Starting again at 2 a.m. on the 3rd, we made a single push to the summit. The route was almost entirely difficult ice (60°–90°), although at around half-height there was a single pitch of poor vertical rock (M4/M5). (There would be no safe place to bivouac on the upper face.) After 14 hours, we reached the crest of the southwest ridge, left our packs, and climbed for 30 minutes to the summit.

We descended quickly along the southwest ridge, hoping to get as low as possible that night. At the site of Camp 2, a guide made us tea and offered a place in the tent for the night. We thanked him for the tea but decided to continue, helped by fixed ropes.

At around 5,900m, we passed the spot where Honza fell. I checked the anchors he would have been clipped into at the time, and they were intact. Tired, I nearly made a mistake myself while rappelling. Eventually, we arrived at Camp 1 (5,600m), which was empty. We pitched our small tent and immediately fell asleep.

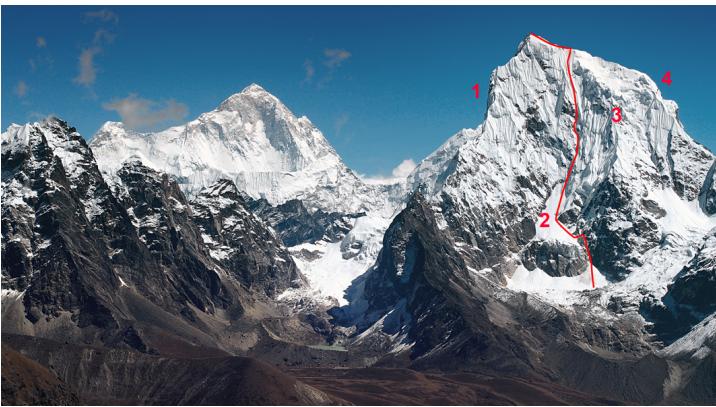
Next day, we searched the area where we had previously recovered Honza's body, and Radoslav found his camera. After a short remembrance, we continued down to the village of Phortse. We named our route **Just One Solution (1,200m, ED WI4+ M5)**. [Editor's Note: To the right of the line climbed by Groh and Hak is the west rib, which was climbed to the southwest ridge (but not quite to the summit) in 1988 by Americans Greg Collins, Andy Selters, and Tom Walter, and has been repeated several times. The left edge of the face is formed by the northwest ridge, a 37-pitch, stegosaurus-like crest also first climbed by the 1988 expedition (see AAJ 1989)].

– Zdeněk Hák, Czech Republic

## Images



Cholatse from the west showing the new route Just One Solution and the descent of the southwest ridge, with bivouacs marked. The west rib, between these two lines, was first climbed by Americans Greg Collins, Andy Selters, and Tom Walter in 1988, stopping in deep snow not far from the summit.



Looking east at Makalu (left) and Cholatse, showing (1) northwest ridge (1988), (2) Just One Solution (2023), (3) West Rib (2023), and (4) Southwest ridge (1982).



Radoslav Groh climbing steep ice early in the morning of the second day on the west face of Cholatse.





Radoslav Groh climbing steep ice early in the morning of the second day on the west face of Cholatse.



Radoslav Groh emerges into sunshine on the west face of Cholatse.



Radoslav Groh belays beneath a serac barrier early in the morning of summit day on the west face of Cholatse.

## Article Details

Author	Zdeněk Hák
Publication	AAJ
Volume	65
Issue	98
Page	318
Copyright Date	2024
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions