

In spite of bad weather which sometimes prevented flights to Lughla, the Sherpa Co-operative completed the airlift of our stores by early June. Everything was crammed into Nima's house.

It was good to have our last-minute rush three months before we were due to set out for Kathmandu. Inevitably, a few items had not been delivered on time and there were lots of loose ends to tie up, but the bulk of the organisational work had been carried out. This gave most of us time to relax a little before the expedition. Doug Scott, with his insatiable appetite for climbing, went off to the Karakorum to climb in the Kafo region, Ronnie Richards joined him from Kathmandu; Martin Boysen went to the Trango Tower; Tut Braithwaite went off to the Alps and had a very successful season.

With time to concentrate on some detailed expedition planning, I endeavoured to work out the exact logistic pattern we might encounter on the mountain. Ian McNaught Davis, an old friend and member of our Committee of Management, runs a computer firm in London and he made available Stephen Taylor, one of his programmers, to write a programme to help plan our logistics. Quickly, I discovered that it was impossible to get the computer to do it all for you; rather, it represented a quick check on one's own planning ideas, telling whether the logistic plan would work or not. We made a climbing game in which I gave the order for movement and load-carrying, and the computer would swiftly calculate the finish at the end of each day. We played this through three times but always reached a logistic bottleneck around Camp 4. As a result of this, I developed a formula for planning the most effective distribution of manpower in the early and mid stages of the expedition, which seemed to solve the problem. Not only did this work so well that we followed it almost exactly in practice, but also—when we changed the siting of our camps in the later stages of the expedition—I found I was able to adapt mentally to the changing situation quickly, even at 25,500 feet. I prepared a programme for the climb which would, in theory, enable us to make a summit bid towards the end of September. At the end of July 1975, however, when we flew out to Kathmandu, I did not dare believe that we could possibly achieve these targets; there were so many unknown factors; the weather, performance of the Sherpas, the state of the snow, our own ability to acclimatise in a very fast ascent.

On the eve of departure, even our best friends gave us no more than an even chance of success—these were the odds quoted by John Hunt at our press conference. Some members of the team felt even this to be optimistic.