

## CORRESPONDENCE

London,  
3.5.60.

To The Editor, *Alpine Journal*.

SIR,

*Shilla's height*

Without wishing to detract in any way from the excellence and usefulness of a volume so comprehensive as Marcel Kurz's *Chronique Himalayenne*, I feel that it is necessary to point out, and not only to point out but to set at rest once and for all, the question of Shilla's disputed height. On page 29 of the book, the height of this elusive mountain is given as 7,025 m.

The attractive story about the Survey of India Khalasi who climbed Shilla in 1860 in order to erect a pole on its summit, and was then credited with an ascent to over 23,000 ft., cannot be perpetuated.

Considerable doubts about Shilla's height have existed for some time, and around 1954 the original Survey Records were carefully scrutinised by Col. R. H. Phillimore, who has been compiling a series of volumes entitled *Historical Records of the Survey of India*, when it was discovered that the 23,000 ft. height was calculated from a *single* intersection, and that the survey observer made no record that he was observing to flag, pole, cairn, or other signal. As a result of this, the height immediately became suspect.

In 1955 when climbing with Peter Holmes in the Spiti Valley, we had ample opportunities to observe Shilla both from the Ratang nalla opposite, and from the Shilla nalla at a distance of about 5 miles. Our observations confirmed that the height of Shilla did not approach 23,000 ft. and was more likely to be around 21,000 ft.<sup>1</sup>

I passed our observations on to the Surveyor-General of India who, in the light of additional research carried out, informed me that he had issued instructions to strike out the offending height from all future issues of Survey of India maps. And this, I understand, has been done.

Other observers, notably J. de V. Graff in 1952, photographed Shilla and expressed similar doubts about its height. Marcel Kurz has commented on this in *The Mountain World*, 1954, p. 221, and he points out to me in a recent letter that the omission of these comments in his *Chronique Himalayenne* was both unfortunate and unintended. He admits that he is not of the 'pro-23,000 ft.' faith.

<sup>1</sup> (See *A.J.* 61. pp. 296 sqq.)

All that is required now, is the despatch of an official Survey party to Spiti with the object of measuring Shilla's true height; preferably climbing it as well, for it is an easy snow mountain. Although the Survey of India are busy at the moment with more important aspects of their maps of the Himalayan frontiers, I fear that they will not allow others to take on the job for the time being.

Yours, etc.,

(Signed)

TREVOR BRAHAM.

To the Editor of the *Alpine Journal*.

4th April 1960

DEAR SIR,

*The English Church, Zermatt*

As one whose father and twin brother have been members of the Alpine Club for a number of years, and as a Committee Member of 'The Commonwealth and Continental Church Society', I write to ask your readers' very kind help.

The lovely little C. of E. Church at Zermatt (whose graveyard holds the tombs of many famous mountaineers from Edward Whymper's time onwards, and whose Sunday services are always a happy meeting place for all English visitors) is on our priority list for interior decorations. The cost will only be £50, and it is felt that past and present A.C. and S.A.C. Members might like to defray this.

The Church is beautifully situated, and besides our English Services we always lend it on Sundays for Services taken by a Swiss Pastor in French or German. So I feel it is fulfilling a most valuable work of international Christian unity. The collections, however, scarcely cover our Chaplain's expenses, and so we would be very grateful for your readers' kind help—and indeed for a donation if possible from the Club itself?—as if the Church is in poor repair it sadly reflects on our Nation.

May I also on behalf of the Committee extend a warm welcome to all members or friends of the Alpine Club to any of our Continental Chaplaincies Services—Lists of places and Seasons will be supplied most gladly by The Secretary of the Commonwealth & Continental Church Society, 7 York Buildings, Adelphi, London, W.C.2 (Phone: Whitehall 1563), who also will be so pleased to receive any cheques for this special appeal for redecorating the Church at Zermatt.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) GUY S. FOTHERGILL.