

as leader. We arrived at Xining via Beijing on July 23. On July 25, we left Xining by jeep and drove through Dulan, Golmud and across the Kunlun Shankou Pass to the south side of Yuzhu Feng, a total of 983 kilometers. We set up Base Camp there at 5050 meters on July 29. We established Camp I on the west face at 5650 meters on August 2. On August 3, Wakita and Ota climbed the right side of the west face to reach the southeast ridge, which they followed to the summit (6179 meters, 20,273 feet).

KINICHI YAMAMORI, *Himalayan Association of Japan*

*Kok Sel, Xinjiang.* A 17-member Japanese expedition led by Eiji Kamei climbed for the first time a 6705-meter (21,998-foot) peak in the Kongur group, which they called Kok Sel. After establishing Base Camp at 4600 meters on August 1, they placed three more camps on the mountain. On August 16, Toshikazu Sato and Hisashi Furuichi climbed to the summit, followed by three others the next day.

## CIS

*Khan Tengri, International Speed Climbing Competition, Kirghizstan.* In order to compete, Conrad Anker and I were graciously hosted at the climbing camp on the South Inylchek Glacier in mid-August. This unique event is essentially a high-altitude race, but it is much more than that. It requires not only aerobic strength but also solid mountaineering judgment, high-altitude experience and all the diverse skills needed to climb on high peaks safely. Although enthusiastic, I immediately realized the potential for accidents if the competitors fail to understand the individual nature of the event. One needs to temper the desire to win with sound mountaineering judgment. The competition took place on the west ridge of Khan Tengri (6995 meters, 22,950 feet) between August 16 and 19. The eighteen competitors were given a four-day period over which to begin the ascent. Each one determined when he would leave and was timed round-trip from Base Camp at 4100 meters. The elevation gain is 2895 meters or 9500 feet. Tents or snow caves were available with water at 4300, 5800 and 6400 meters. The previous record of 14:30 (14 hours, 30 minutes) was held by Russian Gleb Sokolov. I won the race in a time of 10:08 and Conrad Anker was second in 12:13. Third and fourth places went to Russian Andrei Kuznetsov (12:30) and Kirghiz Sergei Penzov (13:06). Ten out of 18 starters finished the event. Conrad and I have been invited to return next year and plan to do so. Three other Americans have also been invited. The Kirghiz hope to see strong Western European climbers attend next year.

ALEX LOWE

*Khan Tengri Tragedy.* On July 23, a number of teams occupied camp in the 6000-meter col between Pik Chapayeva and Khan Tengri: Ukrainians, Rus-

sians, Poles, Kazakhs, Hungarians, Koreans, Japanese. A severe snowstorm began. At 4:45 A.M. on July 25, an avalanche covered the camp. Poles cut through their tent to get to the outside and began to free others from the snow. In three tents, four people were dead: two Ukrainian guides and two other Poles. Those in snow caves all survived although in at least one the entrance was closed and when it was opened, the sleeping climbers were in bad condition because of the lack of air. Bad weather continued and the descent was dangerous.

JÓZEF NYKA, *Editor, Taternik, Poland*

*A Second Khan Tengri Tragedy.* A British commercial expedition had three clients led by aspirant guide Peter Potter. At the 4200-meter Base Camp they were joined by Russians Ilia Iodis and Valeri Khrishchaty, who were to act as guides. The party had climbed to 6300 meters for acclimatization before retiring again to Base Camp. One of the Englishmen then withdraw since he had not been able to stand the altitude. The other five returned to Camp I at 4300 meters on August 2. The next morning they set out early up the narrow trough of the Semenovski Glacier which leads to the western col between Pik Chapayeva and Khan Tengri, the normal route up this now frequently climbed mountain. At eleven A.M., they stopped for a rest below 5000 meters in a spot which they felt was safe from avalanches. Ilia decided to return and Khrishchaty descended a little to talk to him. Just then, a colossal avalanche fell from Pik Chapayeva, engulfing the two Russians and Britons Robert Guy and Patrick West. Potter, who was slightly higher, was caught only by the edge of the avalanche and he extricated himself. After finding no trace of the others, he managed to descend to Camp I, finding the whole area covered to within a 500 meters of the camp. A six-day search resulted in finding the body of only one of the Englishmen.

*Fanskiye Gory, Tadzhikistan, 1992.* On June 16, 1992, Rick and Alison Allen, Sharu Prabhu and our Russian hosts, Sergei Yefimov and Valeri Pershin, drove all day by truck and jeep, along good roads, and finally a rough track, into the Fanski Mountains and to Base Camp at the roadhead, just north of Alaudin Lake. After several days for acclimatization, we climbed to camp at 4020 meters on the glacial moraine below the peak, Zamok (5070 meters, 16,634 feet). On June 22, we walked up the Zamok Glacier, which steepened into a couloir which we climbed. After a long traverse to the north, we reached the southeast ridge which we followed to reach the summit of Zamok in five hours of scrambling. On the 24th, we left Base Camp to attempt the highest peak, Chimtarga (5482 meters, 17,985 feet). We camped at 4000 meters above Mutne Lakes. Yefimov, Sharu Prabhu and I teamed up together, while Rick Allen set off ahead with Pershin in the lead. The latter is one of Russia's finest rock climbers. The deep covering of snow made difficult rock climbing even harder. Eventually, we arrived at a good bivouac ledge on the east ridge at 5000 meters.

On June 26, we continued up the east ridge and after many hard pitches were stopped 50 meters below the summit. On the 27th, we roamed over several summits, including the highest, and made a long descent down the north ridge to a pass and then abseiled down in waist-deep snow over avalanche-threatened cliffs into a gorge. We then glissaded and walked to Mutne Lakes and Base Camp. Rick then reclimbed Zamok with Alison. We packed up and left Base Camp on June 30 for Samarkand.

DOUGLAS SCOTT, *Alpine Climbing Group*

*Peaks Above Vanch Valley, Pamir, Tadzhikistan, 1992.* Richard Leech, Oliver Shergold, Martin Shelley, Polly Truscott, Punit Khare, Louise Rickard, Rob Haddock, Roy Bannerman and I as leader made up the Imperial College Pamir Expedition. We joined 11 Russians from Kazan for six weeks of climbing in the Vanch valley, previously unexplored by Westerners. We drove 200 kilometers from Dushanbe to Vanch. From there, we traveled by dirt road and stretches of no road by truck another 90 kilometers to the head of the Vanch valley, where we placed Base Camp at 3025 meters. We carried loads up the Abdukagor Glacier, establishing four camps at 3100, 3200, 4800 and 5100 meters, the highest on the col between the Abdukagor and the Fedchenko Glaciers. Camp V was at the head of the Fedchenko below Pik Revolyutsii. From these camps we made the first British ascents of Pik Malysh (5430 meters, 17,815 feet) on July 20, 1992 via the southeast ridge, Pik Kovshovykh (5850 meters, 19,193 feet) on July 21 via the northwest face, Pik Tanymas (5998 meters, 19,679 feet) on July 27 via the west ridge and Pik St. Exupéry (6063 meters, 19,892 feet) on July 27 via the southwest face. This gave us a range of difficulties, ranging from Malysh, a simple snow-and-ice climb to Kovshovykh, a hard, steep rock-and-ice ascent which involved some aid climbing. An attempt on the Pik 26 Komissorov (6834 meters, 22,421 feet) had to be abandoned due to bad weather. In the remaining time, we put up a possibly new route on the northeast ridge of Pik of the Paris Commune (6354 meters, 20,846 feet). The descent back down the Abdukagor Glacier proved tricky due to the collapse of snow bridges, taking seven hours rather than one! During the return drive to Dushanbe, we attempted to cross the Vanch River, whose course had changed, but ended by sinking the truck. It took three days to ferry all the gear over to some cliffs by Tirolean traverse and to retrieve the truck with bulldozers.

PHILIP WICKENS, *Imperial College, England*

*French Youth Expedition to Ak-Su, Pamir Alai, Tadzhikistan, and the Piolet d'Or.* A group of young French climbers was selected by the Groupe de Haute Montagne. Under the leadership of Luc Jourjon, François Pallandre and Rémy Karle, they were Raphaël Deschamps, Didier Dumont, Emmanuel Guy, Romain Luksenberg, Bruno Montanarini, Lionel Pouzadoux, Charles Sevin, 15-year-old Jean-Baptiste Jourjon, Eric Neves, Lionel Daudet and David Jonglez. The French spent a month in the region, put up new routes and repeated some of the

harder routes. Both Jourjons, Karle, Deschamps, Luksenberg and Montanarini took three days to climb a 48-pitch route on the southeast ridge of the Peak of the Forty Thieves or P 4520. On the west face of the Central Pyramid or P 3850, Luc Jourjon, Montanarini, Deschamps and Pallandre along with several Russians pioneered the Butterfly. On the same peak's north face, over a period of 15 days, Daudet, Pallandre, Jonglez, Pouzadoux and Sevin worked out a very difficult 720-meter-high route they called Artificial Paradise. It was mostly difficult aid up to A4. On the Russian Tower or P 4240, Pallandre and Pouzadoux freed the Peristroika Crack, first climbed by Spaniards in 1991. They climbed the long 18th pitch free. Both Jourjons, Luksenberg and Jonglez also ascended the highest mountain in the region, Píramidalny (5507 meters, 18,068 feet) by its northeast ridge. For their climbs, the whole group was awarded the *Piolet d'Or*.

*Little Iskander and Pik Domaskaya, Ak Su.* Fabrizio Defrancesco, Stefano Nicolussi and I climbed above the Ak Su valley in July. After a two-day approach, we set up Base Camp at 2800 meters on June 30. We were attracted to the 750-meter-high face of Little Iskander (4520 meters, 14,830 feet). On July 2 and 3, we carried material to the foot of the wall. On the night of the 5th, we bivouacked 500 meters below the foot of the face and set out in the dark on July 6. We climbed free cracks and dihedrals to complete the new route (UIAA VI) at three P.M. Defrancesco later soloed a new route (VI+) on the west face of Pik Domaskaya.

PAOLO BORGONOVA, *Club Alpino Italiano*

## Mongolia

*Kharkiraa.* Mauro Taramelli, Nicoletta Piazza and Stefano Crotta were taken by the Mongol Altai Club to the province of Ivs in northwest Mongolia. From Ulangoon, the regional capital, they rode on horseback to 3100 meters at the base of Kharkiraa. From there they climbed the normal route to the summit (4116 meters, 13,504 feet). In the province of Uvs, a number of peaks remain unclimbed.

GIANNI PAIS-BECKER, *Club Alpino Italiano*