

THE SWISS CAUCASUS EXPEDITION, 1933.

By W. WECKERT.

(Translated and abridged.)

AFTER months of preparation we left Zürich on June 17, for Warsaw *via* Vienna. From Warsaw we reached the Russian frontier in 10 hours more, Moscow being attained early on the 21st. Here we were met by an official of the travel bureau 'Inturist' and conducted to the Hotel New Moscow. On the next day we visited the sights of the town, and were able to obtain a swim in the Moskova with the utmost difficulty. We lived in three rooms on the second floor of the hotel, keeping naturally all windows open on account of the great heat. On waking up one morning I found my trousers missing, while Saladin had lost all his clothes; in addition our solitary *Leica* [camera] had also vanished. We had obviously been 'visited' during the night, but neither of us had heard a sound. On the floor were footprints leading outwards to the wall. The thief had obtained a good haul: 150 dollars, 70 Swiss francs, watches, knives, pocket-books, the *Leica*, and all our railway tickets. After great delay a militiaman appeared, followed suddenly by a workman bringing our clothes—naturally minus the contents of their pockets. We were assured that everything would be recovered: a fact which has not in any way eventuated up to the present moment!

We left Moscow the same night for the South. For the following 70 hours we stowed all our kit in our compartment, lashed everything together, and each of us kept watch for 2 hours at a time. Finally, 10 days after leaving Zürich, we attained, on June 26, our destination and starting-point Naltshik.

The necessary preparations were quickly made, loads regulated so that everything could be packed on six horses. We left Naltshik at midday June 27. Under a blazing sun we gradually traversed the steppe towards the wooded and green foothills. As evening approached we pitched camp on a knob at a height of some 1400 m. We went peacefully to sleep under a clear sky, but were soon aroused out of our sleeping-bags by sheets of rain, which continued till the following morning. In the drenched and sodden terrain our wretched animals floundered for hours, and progress was terribly slow. At last we attained the highest point, and descended steeply to the valley flats of Karnau, where we forded the torrent and entered the Urwaw river, a narrow gorge in the Bezingi glen. Gradually the scenery changed from wood and swamp into bare, sunbaked wastes.

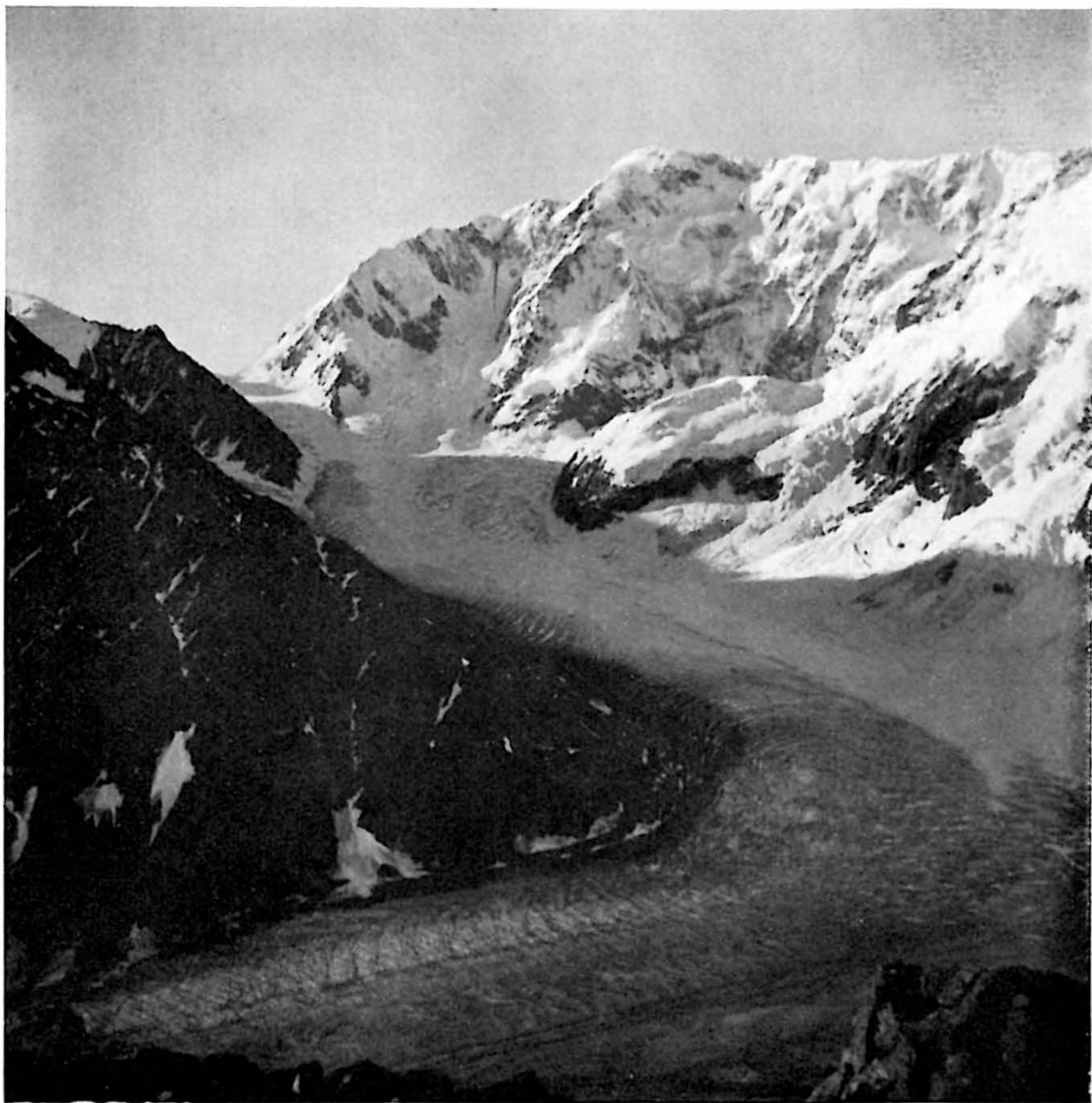
¹ Herren W. Rickenbach, Otto Furrer, L. Saladin, P. Bühler, and myself.



Photo, W. Weckert.]

DYCHTAU.

[To face p. 360



Photo, W. Weckert.]

SHKARA AND BEZINGI GLACIER.

Towards evening we reached Bezingi, where we established our first stores' dépôt. On the following day we arranged the division of our food and equipment supplies. Furrer was suddenly taken ill with fever of a malarial nature and all remedies proved vain. On the second day the remaining four set out with two horses and two donkeys. Furrer remained behind in Bezingi with the interpreter. We climbed steeply up from 1500 m. to 3100 m., descending thence some 1200 m. to Kundium in the Balkar glen, attained about 6 P.M. after an arduous 11 hours' march. We slept in the school, while our drivers worked nearly all night to obtain fresh animals for the further march. On the following day, July 1, we again advanced up the valley with three horses. After a good 4 hours' march we attained the shepherds' *kosh* named Karaulka, where we pitched our tent. Very early next morning we set out for the Shtulu Pass; for hour after hour we progressed under a blistering sun, halting at about 2800 m. for a midday rest at the same spot where we subsequently pitched our camp. Further progress was exceedingly difficult for the horses owing to the extremely steep and slippery terrain. Higher up lay a steep snowfield where the horses plunged in up to their bellies and, even when unloaded, appeared powerless to advance. I struggled on up to the pass at about 3400 m., and it became clear that the passage with horses was impracticable as the other side lay in still deeper snow. We were therefore obliged to give up our designs on the Adaichoch Group, and decided to try some expeditions in the Sugan range. Unloading the heavy cases and rucksacks we descended to our previous halting-place.

On July 3, accompanied by the drivers, we abandoned camp and mounted steep grass and débris to point 3668 m., *Borcheton*. Here our Caucasians returned to the tent, while we four set out for the S. arête of Sugantau. Snow lying deeply everywhere caused us much exertion. Even the steep rocks were thickly covered, while the weather steadily worsened, and soon a thunderstorm accompanied by snow-flurries broke over us. While Rickenbach and Saladin set to work to dig out an ice cave in the steep névé, Bühler and I climbed up some 400 ft. higher on to the top of the next gendarme, whence the gathering storm soon drove us back to the others. After 2 hours' strenuous work with pick and shovel we had scooped out a roomy cave, stopping up the entrance with our sacks. It snowed all night and next morning, masses of beautiful powdery snow covered everything. Thick mist enveloped us and, as the storm continued, we determined to retreat to our tent, there to await better weather. Our Caucasians received us warmly.

On the following day rain poured down in streams, keeping us in the tent. On July 7 we left camp, accompanied by a driver as far as the watershed of the Shtulu Pass, whence the latter returned to the tent. From point 3668 m., *Borcheton*, we descended over steep névé steering for the Doppach Glacier. Between Suganbashitau and Doppachtau there falls a most precipitous couloir, some 2000 ft.

long, to the glacier. On two ropes we mounted the steep *névé* slopes merging into the rock and ice flanks of the couloir, Bühler and Rickenbach followed us up and, at 9 A.M., we attained the gap between the peaks at a height of about 3900 m. Here we halted for a second breakfast and discussed the further progress of the expedition. We decided to attempt Doppachtau first. From the gap a sharp snow ridge rises abruptly towards the right. Bühler and Rickenbach took the lead, each party leaving a sack behind. This snowy edge ended in a steep slope. Bühler cut up two-thirds of the slope, where I took over the lead as far as a little snow plateau. Hence the impressive N. face of the final summit towered right over us. A bare ice slope of 60° led to the perpendicular rocky wall. In that broad face an icy chimney or crevice reared upwards for some 400 ft. towards the summit ridge. Roping up all four together, I cut steps for some four ropes' length up to the base of the chimney. Here we changed the lead which Bühler took over, while I followed as second. Hours of continuous difficulties passed by. Hand- and foot-holds had to be fashioned, and since there were no belays of any kind ice pitons proved obligatory. Bühler and I at last got some three ropes' lengths up the face and the summit-ridge appeared no longer so distant. I had precarious foothold on two or three pitons and was belayed to another. The other two were a rope's length below me. Some 30 ft. above me was an overhang in the chimney with a sharp edge to the left of it; the rope between Bühler and myself was threaded through five piton rings. It was nearly 6 P.M. and we spoke of retreat; however, the summit appearing so near we determined on prosecuting the attempt. After some time Bühler overcame the difficult edge of the chimney, after which the face receded and he passed out of my sight. The rope slipped away quicker, and he called out to me that he would soon be on the ridge where a fierce storm was raging. The rope between us was exhausted. My companions below were anxious for progress as they feared being caught by night on the face. As the rope between myself and the third man had all run out, Bühler shouted down to me to unrope as it was no longer difficult, and he would go on for a bit alone; he assured me that higher up there was a good belay for a *rappel* in the descent, so that I also, for all that it was now 6.30 P.M., was in favour of continuing the last bit. Bühler pulled the rope up after him; after a few minutes I called up to him asking whether he was on the top or was returning. After some time he shouted that he was soon coming back, and I surmised he was preparing to rope down from a rock-hitch. Whether he actually was on the highest point we cannot say; at all events he had reached the summit-ridge. Violent gusts of wind were raging over the edge.

Suddenly there came a noise, I looked up and at once Bühler flew over me, striking right and left with fearful force against the chimney walls, and then plunging over the ice slope, right down beyond the lower *bergschrand*, came to a halt further down on a gentler *névé*

terrace. I can think of nothing else but that Bühler was thrown off his balance by a sudden gust of wind and swept away. Far below we could see him lying motionless, then came a tremendous storm with hail and snow. With 30 metres only of rope the descent proved one of extreme difficulty, and it was quite dark before we had finished the wall. On the steep ice slope all the steps were filled with hail, but by lantern light we endeavoured to continue the descent in cloud and drifting snow. Moreover, I was unlucky enough to damage my hands in falling over the bergschrund. The *névé* plateau was so much crevassed that I proposed to bivouac on two rocks in the neighbourhood for fear of a second disaster. In any case, nothing could be done to help Bühler. It was 11 P.M. when we pulled the thin 'Mossetti' sheet over us. We determined during the night to bury Bühler in the glacier, as for us three to carry him down far exceeded our powers and was virtually impossible. At 4 A.M. Rickenbach and Saladin went over to the corpse and dug out a grave for him in the glacier at a height of 4000 m. His old and shattered axe was planted in it as a memorial; above him towers the peak the cause of his cruel end.

Straight away then we commenced the descent, since we had to descend the stone and avalanche-swept couloir before the sun could soften its surface. Late in the afternoon we attained camp where our trusty David greeted us. We made him understand what had happened, but he could hardly believe us. On the following day we struck camp; the weather grew steadily worse, and after three days' continuous rain we reached Bezingi over the same route. From the pass I descended alone.

On arrival in Bezingi I found only the interpreter; Furrer had gone into hospital at Naltshik. The interpreter had a letter stating that Furrer would rejoin on the following day. We stayed two days in Bezingi; we gave our driver the letter with the news of the accident, as also a message to Furrer that if well enough he should join us in Bezingi. We started down the glen with three horses, following mostly the true right bank of the Urwaw stream. About midday we attained the confluence of the Mishirgi torrent in strong flood. We undressed and, partly on foot, partly on horseback, contrived to attain the other bank. Towards evening we arrived at the classical *gîte* of all Caucasian explorers, the Mississkosh. There was a great to-do in this place, a Moscow students' association had also pitched their tents there. As the clouds vanished on the following morning, we saw for the first time the gigantic Bezingi horseshoe of complete wintry appearance. We decided on something towards the lower Zanner Pass, and in the Bezingi group. While packing, Rickenbach explained to me that he was ill with fever and unable to accomplish any climbing. Towards midday two of us set out with heavy packs. We crossed the Bezingi Glacier and mounted mostly near the medial moraine of the glacier. In the upper basin we bore away to the right, and at nightfall attained the 3600 m. rock- and *débris*-composed

Kelbashi. Soon out of the cloud came voices, followed by the Russian students who had attained the same spot by another route. They camped here for the night. On the following morning we went to the northern Zanner Pass and from there over two great icefalls to the lower Zanner. The day was hot and oppressive and the snow wet and heavy. From the pass we mounted a very steep *névé* towards Ljalver. The deep, water-logged snow resting on smooth ice grew ever more dangerous, so we resolved to return and bivouac in the pass, with the intention of continuing the expedition next day when the snow had consolidated. We prepared some food, cowering on some rocks under our 'Mossetti' sheet. Soon it began to snow and continued all night. In the morning some six inches lay all around.

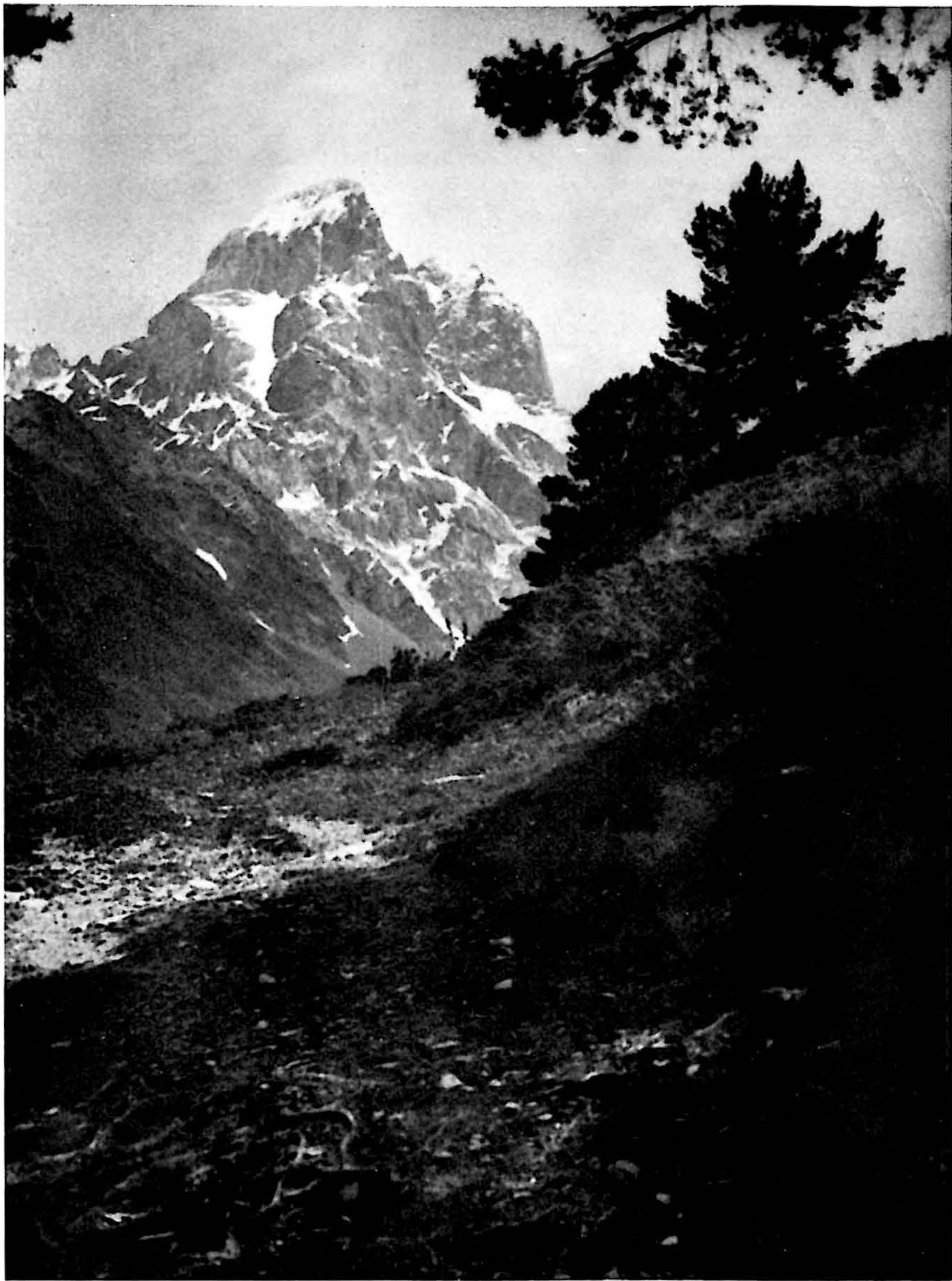
At 7 A.M. we left the bivouac and recommenced work on the slope. Higher up the snow again became doubtful, while the slope grew steeper, corniced moreover heavily on the left. Next followed a short stretch of shattered rock, underlying the deeply snowed-up *névé* crest; this we turned under the cornice. Having overcome this we stood on the summit-plateau of Ljalver. Soon clouds billowed around the nearer peaks; a further prosecution of the expedition along the Bezingi horseshoe appeared impossible for a party of two under such conditions. We descended by the same route, where on the lower part of the *névé* slope snow began again. In thick cloud we could not attempt the descent of the crevassed glacier leading to the main Bezingi, bivouacking accordingly again in the same place. A fearful storm raged all night, and only some hot milk kept life in us till the morning. In spite of cloud we commenced the descent; the lower we came the more we gradually emerged from the mist. Soon we attained the Bezingi Glacier and so on to the Mississkosh.

We thought for certain to find Furrer there, but instead there was a letter to me from Rickenbach saying he had set out, sick, on horseback for Naltshik. So we still remained a party of but two. After a day's rest we shouldered our sacks once more, leaping over the moraine and crevasses of the glacier. Arrived in the farthest basin we turned to the left in the direction of the Dykhsu Pass, and towards evening bivouacked on the true right lateral moraine. On the following morning we followed that moraine to the confluence of the small glacier coming from the base of Mishirgitau. Thence we bore up to the left over *névé* slopes of ever-increasing angle to a small rocky recess—some 4000 m. in height—separated only by a little snowfield from the main mass of the mountain. Here we inaugurated a second bivouac. The rocks, easy enough at a distance, were however thickly plastered with ice and proved extraordinarily difficult. Progress was very slow, as all holds had to be scraped out of the ice. The weather was growing obviously worse, and as at last after many hours of the severest form of climbing we reached a height of about 4700 m., a terrible snowstorm enveloped us.



Photo, W. Weckert.]

USHBA, S. AND N. PEAKS.



Photo, W. Weckert.]

USHBA, BELOW GUL GLACIER.

We halted under the 'Mossetti' sheet and, conditions being already very bad with much fresh snow, determined on retreat, being moreover forced thereto as we were only two in the party, with no reserves of *personnel* to call on. During the last moments of daylight we got out our sleeping-bags and bivouacked once more. On the following morning the rock walls were again plastered with snow—like sugar on a wedding cake. Descending quickly we attained again our camp at the Mississkosh in the late afternoon. Furrer had returned from the hospital at Naltshik. He was still far from well, suffering from mild attacks of fever every evening.

We determined to change our plans once again and cross the upper Zanner Pass, 4100 m., into Suanetia. The entire camp was broken up, and all unnecessary articles were packed on a horse and sent back in charge of the interpreter to Naltshik. Even the pocket ice axe and some pitons together with a tent and stores were sent down valleywards. As a token of farewell 'Massi,' the friendly Mississkosh shepherd and hunter, brought us excellent sour milk.

We then shouldered again our mighty packs, and for the third time tracked up the Bezingi Glacier, bearing after a time to the right to its true left bank. We halted near a little moraine tarn, and then began mounting the endless *débris* slopes leading to Kelbashi at some 3700 m. Our one object was to reflect as little as possible as, step by step, we bore our rucksacks aloft. Again the scenery clouded over, immense masses of storm clouds poured over the ridges, and before reaching Kelbashi we were once more wrapt in snow-flurries. We camped as soon as possible on some *débris*. Next morning, in bitter cold and with our tent covered with ice, we got speedily under way, being followed from Kelbashi by yet another group of Russian students bound also for the Zanner Pass and Suanetia. At 9 A.M. we attained the pass. Deep snow lay on the gentle glacier slopes beyond, and for the first time I longed for ski. The sun blazed down, we broke deeply into the surface at each step—it was like an endless treadmill. The first icefall was turned to the left by a steep glacier valley, the gentle central surface being then quickly attained. Progress was now to the left, turning the second great icefall by a rocky bounding rib affording easy access to the lower glacier's surface. Having descended rather too far into the icefall we had to climb up some 160 ft., hauling our heavy sacks after us over shattered rocks on to the glacier's margin.

We now attained thick scrub and wood through which a kind of track led us downwards, but even then it took some hours, and it was about 10 P.M. before we attained Shabesh, the first Suanetian village. Wassilof, a Russian, was with us; he had an acquaintance in the village whom we soon waked up. After feeding we all sank into deep slumber.

Next morning, owing to the haggling over the hire of horses—for which the natives demanded enormous sums—we were unable to leave before midday. Descending the valley of the Mulkra in

great heat we came after 4 hours' march to Mestia, the chief village of Suanetia. The 'Inturist' and 'Proletarskiturist' possess a tent camp as well as a summer house here. We spent two rainy days in this place, and then proceeded to Betsho at the base of the tremendous Ushba, towering some 3400 m. above the village. Looking up at this fiend, a possible line of approach appears hopeless. We met with a warm welcome at the house of a blacksmith named Germann. His house resembles a Swiss chalet, and he prides himself on having entertained many of those who have attempted Ushba. Schulze, wounded in the first 1903 attempt, was cared for here, and Germann relates with pride the names of his guests. Between 1903 and 1929 no attempt on the mountain had succeeded, but in the latter year a four-day strenuous assault by a Munich party proved successful, the party making the third ascent of the S. peak.²

On the next day we left Betsho and proceeded with a pack-horse to the Gul Glacier. Our worthy host did little work during the following days, he was busy searching for us with his field-glass on the slopes of the mountain. After 3½ hours' work we approached the glacier's terminal moraine. Soon a saddle girth burst and the driver would proceed no farther, so we ourselves shouldered the loads for some hundreds of metres. Our camp was pitched on a level grassy spot close to the moraine. Towards evening I strolled up alone as far as the level ice to reconnoitre the route. Everything was prepared for an early start and we quickly lay down. At midnight we were suddenly aroused, tropical rain descended on our tent and a start was out of the question; the rain continued all day and the following night. Our Russian, Wassilof, could not understand how we kept dry and how not a drop of water forced its way into our tent, while into his own water poured as through a sieve, and stones had to be piled on the floor to prevent the 'contents' being drowned!

On the following day we fetched some eggs and cheese from the hamlet of Gul. A native explained to Wassilof that he had lost three young goats, and if we found them we were to keep one as a present. On the morning of August 1 rain at last ceased, we quietly prepared our breakfast and left the tent at 8 A.M., Furrer and Wassilof accompanying us for some distance. Having crossed the moraine we embarked on the level ice of the Gul Glacier, steering towards the great snow couloir, plunging downwards from the Mazeri gap. Where the great snow ledge stretches out to the right in the face, we abandoned the couloir, Furrer and Wassilof turning back, while Saladin and I divided the entire loads. We climbed up over shattered rocks to the base of the very steep and narrow couloir leading to the notch in the S. ridge, some 3900 m. high. Twenty centimetres of wet snow lay on the hard ice of the floor of the couloir; this balled badly between the spikes of our crampons.

² *A.J.* 42, 116-17.



Photo, W. Weckert.]

PINNACLES FROM THE GAP IN S. ARÊTE OF USHBA TO MAZERITAU.

[To face p. 366.]

Mists again enshrouded us so that we could not see as far as the notch. We climbed slowly higher while the gully grew ever steeper, being moreover blocked at its end by a small rocky overhang. At 2.30 P.M. we attained the 3900 m. notch. Thence we looked across to the great lower snowfield. It lay in the full afternoon sun, and small fresh snow avalanches and stones swished continuously across it. We determined accordingly to bivouac where we sat, and to continue next morning while the face lay in shadow. We built a little wall in the gap as a bivouac place. Suddenly I spied among the stones a tin containing a card, apparently quite new, belonging to Schulze . . . it was dated July 27th, 1903, and contained the names of the successful first party : Schulze, Helbling, Weber, Reichert, Schuster.

During the whole night there blew a strong wind thrashing our thin sheet about us. At 7.30 A.M. we scrambled down over iced rocks and a snowy gully to the end of the great snowfield. The latter was hard as a rock, but easily accessible to our Eckenstein irons without step-cutting. The first party had taken the left-hand bounding rib, but as this was glazed with thick ice, we climbed the entire snowfield without touching rock. Later we scrambled up to the perpendicular wall, traversing then to the left over a crumbling ledge to the 'red corner,' so called from the colour of the rocks. Here we halted for a midday rest. As I gazed round the corner to the west, I could perceive the steep slope leading to the final wall. This entire slope consisted of blue ice ; to save endless cutting, we climbed to the right up a rock rib, very slabby at first and very hard indeed in its upper part. To the left the great wall plunges vertically for at least 6000 ft. down to the Ushba Glacier. Looking upwards at the final face we could see a kind of spray streaming over the entire line of ascent, where the melting snow from the summit snow-cap falls as through a sieve in the face. We hoped to find a bivouac place under the wall, but the steep ice clung to the vertical face in every place. With difficulty we contrived on our knees to boil some tea and then set about attacking the wall. It was all alike whether we stopped here or higher up—the hour being 4.30 P.M. Some 100 ft. to the left of the rib, I attacked the wall. The work soon became very difficult ; occasionally we came across old remains of rope rings ; these broke up like paper at the least touch. Having scaled a very hard chimney blocked with a chock-stone, we reached a narrow, crumbling ledge roofed over by a great overhang. I tried to turn this to the left, but having overcome a few metres with the greatest difficulty, found the remainder impossible. I was standing under a regular waterfall and was already soaked to the skin. The last rays of the sun were slanting across while, quicker than we could imagine, came darkness. Our fingers were numb with cold and wet, and only with the utmost trouble could I force my way back to the shattered ledge.

What did the night portend ? There was no choice but quickly to hammer in two pitons, secure the rope round these and lash ourselves

to the wall. Across the face glinted in the distance the double-peaked Elbruz. Fortunately we had brought our down sleeping-bags with us ; we hung the rucksack on to a piton, since nowhere was it possible to lie down, while everywhere yawned the great abyss. With the greatest difficulty, one after the other, we stepped into the bags. In a crack glimmered some ice ; we hammered this out and contrived after one upset to melt it in the Meta cooking-pot. Minutes passed like hours and midnight would not approach. Once I went to sleep, then suddenly waked with a start ; I had slipped a bit and the rope had brought me up with a jerk. From pleasant dreams I awoke to the grim realities of the dizzy depths around. At last the dark heavens turned steely blue and gently night gave place to light. Morning broke bitterly cold, the melted water had turned to solid ice. Again we prepared some milk and got ready for the grim struggle. Twice I attempted the overhang in vain, being defeated by cold fingers ; finally, about 9.0 A.M., I overcame this really desperate place ; next followed two chimneys which we scaled with some speed. I then stood at the base of a great sweep of smooth slabs. I climbed down a few feet and traversed out to the left into the glazed recess of the wall. Every foot- or hand-hold was iced. Carefully I hammered out the ice from the cracks and gingerly crawled diagonally upwards, inch by inch, along the face. I then came to an overhang and was forced to traverse to the right to the upper end of the slabs. Very slowly, the fingers clinging to icy grips, I overcame this bit—these 120 ft. had taken us well over two hours. We now stood in a glazed gully through which had poured the melted refuse from the snow-cap above. We climbed the gully by its right bank and, scrambling over a chock-stone, attained the snowfield. Binding on our crampons and having taken a short rest, we mounted the snowfield ; then turning to the right followed the heavily corniced arête to the S. peak of Ushba, attained on August 3 at 2.50 P.M.

Clouds prevented all view, but just for one moment we perceived Betsho in a parting of the mists. We found also the cards of the Munich, 1929, party and wrote our names on them. After twenty minutes' halt we began the descent, and were soon on the margin of the wall. With a 160-ft. rope there followed one *rappel* after another ; at our bivouac place we quickly packed up our sleeping-bags and continued the descent. At 6 P.M. we reached the foot of the rocks. Fitting on crampons we clambered down partly over ice, partly on rocks, to the 'red corner.' At 8 P.M. we descended the last abrupt step, just as the remnants of daylight vanished. We had eaten nothing all day and accordingly proceeded to cook without ceasing till 11 P.M. We dreamt away the moonlit night in our comfortable sacks. A sort of gloaming lay above the valleys. We woke up at 4 A.M. in clouds, which, however, rapidly dispersed ; at 5 we recommenced the descent, at first over highly glazed rocks, then, lower down, over hard névé to the latter's extremity. Then

at once we scaled the snowy crevice to the gap in the S. arête where we had made our first bivouac. Rapidly boiling some tea we divided the rest of the food, and continued the descent down the narrow ice gully. When about half-way down we heard a fearful crash above in the wall; both of us rapidly secured ourselves with the axes fixed between rock and ice. It was a great stonefall. With rucksacks placed over our heads, we saw vast masses of rock flying down towards us; these plunged all around, but the sacks luckily saved our heads from the countless splinters. On peace being restored once more, we hurried with all our might out of this frightful death-trap. The lower rocks led to the great snow couloir, which in turn brought us to the Gul Glacier. At 2 P.M. we regained the camp. Furrer and Wassilof assuaged our raging hunger with the meat of the goat they had succeeded in capturing. After two hours we struck camp and descended to Betsho, where our host received us with joy. He told us how he had seen us descending the upper bit of the summit snow-cap and congratulated us warmly. Thus thirty years after its first conquest we had accomplished the third direct ascent of Ushba's southern peak.³

[The party continued the journey from Betsho, which they consider the pleasantest village in the Caucasus, *via* Mazeri and the Dolrachala glen to the Betsho Pass. After many transport and glacier tribulations this pass, 3360 m., was crossed by the party and their two gallant donkeys, Tegenekli, where there stands a 'Proletarskiturist' hut and camp, being then safely reached.—*Editor.*]

Tegenekli, lying 140 kilometres from Naltshik and the Balsan glen, is the solitary valley possessing motor communication. We stowed ourselves and our kits in a large and ancient Ford. Starting at midday, there commenced then the most terrible journey, over ploughed fields, ditches, rivers without bridges, then again over fields, till, half dead from sea-sickness, we at length reached Naltshik at 10.30 P.M.

[Here the party met Herr Rickenbach, whose health was somewhat restored, and settled up their various accounts.—*Editor.*]

When all was arranged Furrer and I were obliged to hand over our pistols, which we had been allowed to carry all the time, to a militia post and, in spite of a long argument and promises of restitution, we have never seen them again. The officials pledged themselves to forward the pistols to Zürich, but I think that some functionary is still proudly wearing them. On the next day we were obliged to leave Naltshik at noon to catch the Black Sea steamer at Batum, which runs once only every two or three weeks. After two hours' rail we reached Bisland, where we had to change and wait another two hours. Our connecting train was crammed, and as natives are not allowed to use it, we had great trouble in getting

³ Or the fifth ascent of the mountain.—*Editor.*



Photo, W. Weckert.]

TRAVERSE TO THE 'RED CORNER,' USHBA.

To face p. 368

ourselves and kit on board. Vladikavkas was reached that evening. Next day we drove in a car to Kasbek and over the main road to Tiflis. Unfortunately the entire trip was in rain and cloud and we saw nothing of the mountains.

[From Tiflis the party proceeded to Batum and thence by steamer—in $3\frac{1}{2}$ days—along the coast, *via* Yalta and Sevastopol, to Odessa.]

At Odessa I proceeded to the 'Inturist' office to draw the 750 German marks I had placed *via* Berlin. No one would pay any attention; moreover the deposit receipt was in my pocket-book stolen at Moscow. Even a telegram to the Chief Director at Moscow, who had promised to arrange everything at once, met with the reply 'I know nothing about it.' As we had practically no money, tickets for the ship were given to us to Constantinople, endorsed that payment would be made from Zürich. Six months after our return to Zürich the remainder of the money due to us was repaid.⁴

We had experienced many pleasant but also far more evil and trying adventures. I cannot end without paying a tribute to our dear and unforgotten comrade, Paul Bühler, whom we left behind in his icy grave. To him I bid a last farewell.

[We are greatly indebted to Herr Weckert for his very interesting narrative.—*Editor*, 'A.J.']

MT. TRONADOR (11,380 FT.).

Some 1934 Attempts.

THE year 1934 will long be remembered in the mountaineering history of the Tronador, as in the space of a week the mountain suffered its first complete defeat and claimed its first victims.

The first conquest went to Herr G. Claussen, a German engineer, resident for many years in the district, who utilized the eastern ridge between the Alerce and Castaña Overa rivers and followed the route shown on photo No. 1. Leaving his camp at a height of 5300 ft., he set out alone at 4 A.M. on January 30, 1934, and attained the point 'A,' marking the commencement of a difficult horizontal traverse on steep ice, at 4 P.M. Thence he took 6 hours to complete the traverse and climb the remaining 150 ft. He had perfect weather for his climb, and as the night of the 30th was windless—an amazing coincidence which anyone who knows this stormy region will appreciate—he spent all night on the top in order to obtain a set of

⁴ The rest of the journey was accomplished by Italian steamer *via* the Dardanelles, Piraeus, Corinth Canal and the Dalmatian coast to Venice. Thence by rail to Zürich.—*Editor*.