

SOVIET MOUNTAINEERING IN 1966

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(Translated by A. J. IMRIE)

CONDITIONS for expeditions and ascents in the Soviet Union during the summer of 1966 proved to be highly complex. In the winter of 1965-66 there was frost and little snow in the Caucasus. In the spring, it was the other way round, with heavy falls of snow. The summer was very hot, and the danger from stone-fall increased considerably. Many snow routes became completely clear and turned into straight ice routes, and the ice slopes became marked with the black stains of rock falls.

In the Tien-shan different conditions developed. In contrast to the Caucasus, here there were heavy falls of snow. The snow which piled up did not disappear before the end of the summer. Climbers on literally every route had to make a track wallowing up to their waists, or even up to their chests in crumbly, dry snow. The danger of avalanches increased considerably.

All this naturally made climbs much more complicated, and routes more difficult. However, this did not prevent Soviet mountaineers from accomplishing a great many complex climbs of the highest grade and doing a number of new routes. As usual, mountaineering camps were set up in the Caucasus, Pamirs, Tien-shan and Altai mountains, where, under the leadership of experienced instructors, young people mastered the basic principles of mountaineering. During the season tens of thousands of climbers in all reached the summits. On the routes of the highest grade (5) alone, there were more than a thousand sportsmen.

A group of young mountaineers from Alma-Ata, led by B. Studyenin, climbed the North face of Free Korea Peak (4740 m.) in the Tien-shan, by a new and highly complex route. A Moscow team led by A. Tkachenko made a new route on the East face of the South Peak of Ushba. A team of railwaymen-mountaineers led by M. Konkov did a fine and complex climb on the North face of Chatyn-Tau (4368 m. in the Caucasus), with its extremely difficult 400 m. 'black wall'. Further opening up of the peaks of the Ulu-Tau massif in the Caucasus has continued. A. Naumov's group made the first ascent of its East Peak (4058 m.) by the North-east rib, which comes out on to the East shoulder of the peak.

The most interesting traverses of the year were done in the Pamirs. For example, some Leningrad sportsmen, led by P. Budanov, traversed the crest of the Academy of Sciences ridge from Akhmadi Donish (6666 m). to Peak Korzhenev (7105 m.).

Among the traverses in the Caucasus, one must mention the achievement of mountaineers of North Ossetia, who did the traverse of the Sugan ridge from Galdor to Gyulchi. B. Popov led this traverse.

The highest point in the Soviet Union, Peak Communism (7495 m.) was conquered this year by some Moscow climbers, led by V. Kavunenko and a group of Ukrainian sportsmen of the expedition led by V. Monogarov. Another group from the same expedition carried out an ascent of Peak Russia (6852 m.) and then all members of the expedition climbed Peak Pravda (6400 m.).

The first ascent of Peak Ogpu (6016 m. in the Pamirs), by the West face, was done by Kiev mountaineers led by A. Kutovski. Some Leningrad climbers led by P. Ivanov did a new route on Peak Akhmadi Donish (6666 m.). Mountaineers from the Kabardine-Balkar republic led by I. Kakhiani and G. Stepanov conquered Peak Tadzhikistan (6565 m.) in the Pamirs by the East face. This complicated route required eight days for the assault on the face alone.

However, the main event in the high-mountain ascents was the assault on Peak Korzhenev (7105 m.) in the Pamirs. Sportsmen from Moscow, Leningrad, Uzbekistan and other cities and republics reached the summit by different routes. They all reached its highest point.

As always, our mountains warmly welcomed mountaineers from abroad as well. Sportsmen from Austria, Bulgaria, the German Democratic Republic, Italy, France, the Federal Republic of Germany, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia came to the Caucasus. Mountaineers from Japan were in the U.S.S.R. for the first time.

Unfortunately, the changeable weather was not notable for special 'hospitality'. Having spoilt a number of climbs by our mountaineers, it made no exception even for guests. Nevertheless, they all achieved many interesting successes.