

Soviet Union

Summary 1969 In spring, when the panel of judges receives the proposals for new climbs which are planned for the different mountain areas of the country, we begin to wait excitedly for the feats which will be accomplished in the summer season, and which will be assessed in the autumn.

Which team will realise its dream and carry out its plan? For it does happen that the unforeseen or what is unprovided-for, forces a party to turn back on a route. There was no snow in the Caucasus in the winter; it only snowed in March, and it did not cover the valleys for long. Because of this, several parties turned back on routes which had become dangerous through stone-falls. June and July in the Caucasus were wet, and considerably limited training climbs; some parties never even started out for their intended objectives. And in August only four out of twenty parties did routes there, despite a fortnight's almost cloudless weather.

Now let us deal with the Twentieth National Climbing Championship. The competition is distinctive in that here there are no fans and no stadium. The parties compete without seeing each other. Then they submit accounts of the climbs they have accomplished, photographs, sketches and diagrams of the whole route, and in particular the more difficult pitches. After a careful study of all the material, the main panel of judges nominates the victors.

The climbs are put into four classes; technically-difficult, traverses, high-altitude technically-difficult, and high altitude.

First, *the technically-difficult class*. Peak Free Korea is situated in the Ala Archinsk spur of the Kirghiz range, in the northern part of the Tian-Shan. Although the local peaks do not exceed 5000 m, the region is covered in ice to a great extent, and the climate is severe, with great differences between day and night temperatures, and much rain. All this makes it difficult for climbers to master the area. However, the fact that there are some interesting and difficult routes and the beauty of the Tian-Shan attract many climbers there.

The routes done by Lev Myshlyaev (in 1961) and Boris Studenin (in 1966) on Peak Free Korea were the gold medal winners of their day. However, several attempts to get over the central part of the face of Peak Free Korea have been unsuccessful, although these climbs have been submitted every year in the championship.

The undisputed claimants of the gold medal this year were parties from Kiev

and Krasnoyarsk, who climbed the North face of Peak Free Korea by new routes. The preference was given to the Krasnoyarsk party led by Valeri Bezzubkin. The climb lasted eight days and the average speed of movement was sixteen metres an hour.

The Kiev party took second place, led as usual by Anatoli Kutuzovski. Parts of the route were covered in ice, and it demanded great efforts and a high degree of technique. There were no real bivouac sites on its entire length. The lower part of the climb consisted of shelving rocks with a minimum of belays, and largely covered in solid ice. The average steepness of the climb was 45° – 55° . After 4pm, when the sun has warmed up the rocks below the summit, this part of the route becomes (objectively) dangerous due to stone-fall. The middle part of the face was at an angle of 80° – 90° , with some overhanging pitches. The final third consisted of smooth slabs, like bricks covered in ice.

To do this route, apart from the normal equipment, platforms and hammocks were essential. Each member of the party had to be completely self-sufficient as regards food and bivouac equipment. The route took eighty-five hours of climbing in twelve days, with an average speed of fourteen metres an hour. 172 rock-pegs, 36 ice-pegs and 33 bolts were used.

Third place was won by an ascent of the South-east face of Tyutyun-Bashi in the Caucasus, done by a team of Kabardino-Balkar mountaineers, led by Mikhail Zalikhhanov. (In 1968 this party took first place for a climb on Peak Ogpu in the Pamirs.) Their choice of objective was not made by chance. They are attracted by new areas, rarely visited by mountaineers. Tyutyun-Bashi Peak (4560 m) is in the Koshtan-Krest range. It turned out to be an interesting climb, with some parts of medium difficulty, and some parts which were extreme. In spite of the fact that it faces south, the face consists mainly of a very hard type of monolithic granite. The climb took five days and 190 pegs.

Routes done in the Western Caucasus did not win prizes because there is not much exposure on the difficult pitches. One of these was the ascent of Peak Dalar by the North-east face, accomplished by a party of climbers from Leningrad, led by Boris Korablin. They took fourth place. Peak Dalar is in the main Caucasus range, in the Uzunkol region. After Peak Gvandri, it is the second highest summit (3979 m) in this area. The climb from the Kitchkinekol gorge is interesting, and is purely rock climbing. A party did this route in very favourable weather and when the climb was in fine condition.

Fifth place was awarded for an ascent of Peak Kirpich (3800 m) by the North-west face, done by a party of climbers from Sverdlovsk, led by Sergei Sogrin.

This peak is also situated in the Usunkol region. In five days the party used 140 pegs, climbing 700 m of practically sheer cliff.

Some more interesting climbs were done in the *traverses section*, where Leningrad climbers led by Yuri Kuzmin were in a class by themselves. They did the difficult traverse of Peaks Garmo–Patriot–Russia–Communism–Pamir—16 km long at a height of more than 6000 m. Thus the whole ridge leading from Garmo to Peak Communism, which had long been a riddle for cartographers, was accomplished.

The climbers got on to Peak Garmo by a new route on the ‘triangle’ and took down the note left by members of the Soviet-British Expedition on 24 July 1962 (see below).

Second place was awarded for the traverse Peaks 26 Bakinski Commissars–Revolution–Shipka–Pamir done by a Moscow party led by Valentin Logvinov. When the expedition arrived at the Bartang gorge it was not new to them, as they had been there the previous year. Prior to this, climbers had not wanted to go out there because of its remoteness. In this case no reconnaissance of the route was necessary. The climbing of Peak 26 Bakinski Commissars by the South face deserves special mention. The great length of the route (2500 m) and the difficult pitches at a height of more than 6000 m testify to its considerable technical difficulty. The climbers did the traverse in seventeen days, using more than 400 pegs for security. The party was supplied with light, concentrated foods which enabled them to lighten the weight of their rucksacs, a very important factor in such a long traverse.

Third place was won by the traverse of Peak Djigit–Slonyenok–Karakolskiy–Oguzbashi 4909, done by a party from Kirghizia led by Anatoli Tustukbayev. The peaks indicated in this traverse are in the Tersk Ala-tu Range (Tian-Shan), at a height of 5000 m and more. Because of the position of the range in the area of the watershed of lake Issyk-Kul, there is a good deal of precipitation on the high-mountain parts of the ridge, mainly as snow. Besides the jaggedness and the steepness of the mountain terrain, during the traverse the climbers encountered extremely dangerous and technically difficult snow-cornices on the ridges. ‘Knife-edged’ ice, typical of this part of the Tian-Shan mountains was often met. The weather was often variable, completely overcast in the afternoon, and with frequent thunderstorms. The success of the climbers who covered 26 km of the Tersk Ala-tu range is all the more noteworthy under these conditions. They suggested that the unnamed Peak 4909, which ended their gigantic traverse, should be named after the first man to set foot on the moon, the American cosmonaut Neil Armstrong.

Fourth place was awarded for a traverse of peaks Kibalchich–Korolev–Tsander, accomplished by a party of mountaineers from Kaliningrad, led by Anatoli Korsun. The summits covered in this traverse are in the range Western Kohshaaltau (Tian-Shan). The climbers added some details to the orography of a relatively well-explored region, although it is rarely visited by climbers. It is clear that in future we will often return to this area, because here there are many vertical faces 1.5–2 km high which await their conquerors.

The main part of the traverse was done at a height of more than 5000 m, and it was 7.5 km long. More than 200 pegs were used on this route. On a number of parts of the ridge they met walls of 100–300 m, sometimes monolithic, but often of very rotten rock, covered in solid ice and deep powder snow. Progress was often barred by steep ice-slopes and ridges with cornices of 50 m.

Fifth place was given for the traverse of Peaks Sandal–Muzdzhil, done by an Odessa party, led by Vadim Sviridenko.

(Translation: Alan Imrie.)

V. Shataev

Trans-Alai Pamirs: Polish expedition 1969 A Russian-Polish party visited the Matcha area, to the north of the Pamir, in July and August. They concluded that the area was very interesting from a climbing point of view, with many virgin peaks of 4000–5000 m giving rock and ice climbing of all standards. The Polish party (leader T. Rewaj) did thirteen new peaks, seven of them over 5000 m. See [89].

Peak Garmo: British accident 1962 The Alpine Club has received through the kindness of the Mountaineering Federation of the U.S.S.R. the note left on the summit of Peak Garmo in 1962 by the party which included Wilfrid Noyce and Robin Smith, who fell to their deaths on the descent (*A.J.* 67 384 and 68 97). It is dated 24 July 1962, 1530 hrs, and records in Russian that a party from the Soviet-British expedition—A. Ovchinnikov, A. V. Sevastianov, Wilfrid Noyce and Robin Smith—climbed Mount Garmo by the normal route and were to descend the same way; weather satisfactory. As noted in the Summary above, the note was recovered by Yuri Kuzmin's party during the Peak Garmo–Pamir traverse.

International meet, Peak Lenin area, Pamirs In the summer of 1969, mountaineers of trades-unions in the U.S.S.R. held this meet to commemorate the Centenary of the birth of V. I. Lenin, founder of the Soviet State. The Base Camp was established in the Alaisk valley, about an hour from the Lenin glacier (map, *A.J.* 73 30), and mountaineers from fifteen countries of Europe



89 *The Trans-Alai Pamirs* The view south-west from Skalisty Peak (5621 m). Great potential for Alpine-type exploration (see opposite). Photo: K. Cielecki

and Asia attempted Peak Lenin, 7134, the third highest peak in the Soviet Union, despite unusually bad weather.

In my opinion the best climb of the meet was done by Toni Hiebeler, Michael Schneider, Jura Ustinov and Oleg Borisenok, respectively from the Federal Republic of Germany and from Leningrad (members of the Spartak society), in the period 26 July–7 August. Toni Hiebeler came to the meet with the intention of doing a first ascent on Peak Lenin, from the Bolshaya Sauk-dary glacier, by the steep snow-ice ridge, which drops parallel to the buttress by which Austrian climbers climbed Peak Lenin in 1967 (*A.J.* 73 31 and [13¹]).

After acclimatisation climbs, and a reconnaissance flight in a helicopter, the route of ascent was chosen, and the landing zones for essential equipment, food supplies and for the climbers were planned. Unfavourable weather delayed the climbers' departure from the Base Camp for two days, but the clouds cleared away at last to allow the climbers to be dropped by helicopter towards the eastern slopes of Peak Lenin. The approach route along the Sauk-Dar glacier turned out to be not particularly easy; they had to climb for a day and a half over the numerous ice-blocks and séracs, crevasses and other obstacles. But all the real difficulties were still ahead. The ice on the buttress demanded strenuous climbing. The lead alternated between the different members of the party. On the first day's climbing on the buttress, they all had to sweat. The co-operation between them was more than excellent, although explanations had to be done

¹ The Austrian Spur, climbed by the Austrians in 1967, is clearly seen on the left of the photograph; the new route starts on the left (orographical) bank of the prominent couloir at the northern (right) extremity of the face, crosses the couloir to arrive on the other side just above the first rocks and follows the ridge to the great ice-slopes above and thence to the summit.

through Schneider and Ustinov in English. So for three days the four climbed slowly towards the summit of Peak Lenin. On the fourth day, literally only a few dozen metres from the top, Toni Hiebeler stopped with frost-bitten feet. Michael Schneider was also not feeling very well. The Ustinov-Borisenok pair climbed to the top, and removed the note left by the Bulgarian climbers who had preceded them. Although Toni and Michael did not reach the highest point, they had overcome all the difficulties of the route, and therefore they can be considered to have climbed Peak Lenin. This route is the most difficult of the routes yet done on Peak Lenin, and was put up for confirmation by the Mountaineering Federation of the U.S.S.R as an upper 6th grade route.

(Translation: Alan Imrie.)

Anatoli Ovchinnikov

Sayan Mountains 1969 Under the auspices of the mountaineering section of the Committee for Physical Culture and Sport of the Council of Ministers of the U.S.S.R. a meet was held here last summer. This range, with the peak of Munku Sardik, 11,453 ft, is situated west of Lake Baikal, near Irkutsk.

Apart from the classification of new routes the party tested samples of mountaineering equipment. The expedition was led by V. Abalakov, and included A. Borovikov, V. Kizel and other veteran climbers. Among representatives of the younger generation were Oleg Abalakov and Misha Razmakhin.

Base Camp was set up at the edge of a wood at a height of 2450 m, near the lichen-stained granite Sayan mountain. It was peaceful in the midst of the *taiga*, apart from the midges. There were neither stonefalls nor avalanches, nor any ice, but there was snow in some of the couloirs. The local inhabitants were most interested in the expedition, the girls offering us local delicacies. Although fruit was included in our supplies we took regularly a new vitamin preparation known as Undvit. This improves physical efficiency and the rate of acclimatisation at high altitudes.

Bad weather restricted exploration to some extent, but it became clear that there are considerable opportunities for Siberian climbers, particularly those from Irkutsk and Angarsk. Many routes of grades 1, 2 and 3 have been discovered and on Sayan itself there are more difficult faces. Apart from ice climbing, there are very good local opportunities for training for mountaineering. There are particularly good rock climbing facilities only two hours drive from Irkutsk.

At present, the main obstacles to development are a lack of experienced leaders—there are only two qualified climbing instructors in the whole

Irkutsk province—and a lack of rescue facilities. Nevertheless, we are sure that the tough and enthusiastic Siberian climbers will soon make their mark in the climbing world.

Eugene Gippenreiter

Hindu Kush

Tirich Mir, 25,263 ft, fourth ascent 1969: Army expedition Day, Owens and Summerton reached summit by South face, 21 July. Day, Summerton and Anderson also did first ascent of Little Tirich, 20,869 ft, on 5 July. Ausher (Owir 1), 17,333 ft, also climbed. Article p 79.



90 *Tirich Mir from Istor-o-Nal* Photo: J-M. Anglada. See also [55]