we had been brought to our limit it was in a way unfamiliar to us. The grinding effort and great commitment without the reward of magnificent technical pitches such as one may encounter on the Grandes Jorasses in winter. Certainly there had been hard climbing but it had not been of the enjoyable type. Hard work is the best description of Himalayan climbing that I can think of. Nevertheless I expect we will all be back again pushing our own personal frontiers of experience. There definitely is something there and memory will dull the pain.

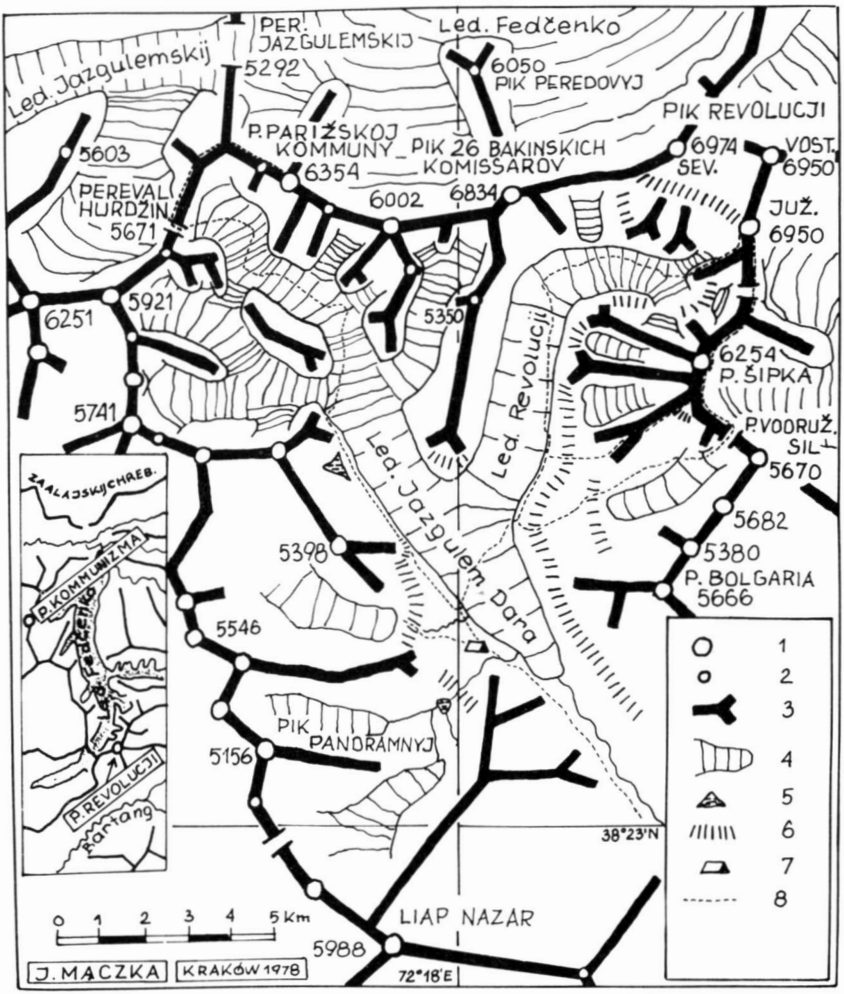
International Alpine Camp, Pamirs 1978

Marek Brniak

Foreign visitors to the mountains of Pamir, members of International Alpine Camp organized by the USSR Mountaineering Federation, were admitted to the area of Revolution Peak for the first time in 1978. Apart from the areas of Peaks Lenin (7132m) and Communism (7495m) already well known to the climbers of the W, this is the only part of the SW Pamirs foreign climbing parties are allowed to enter.

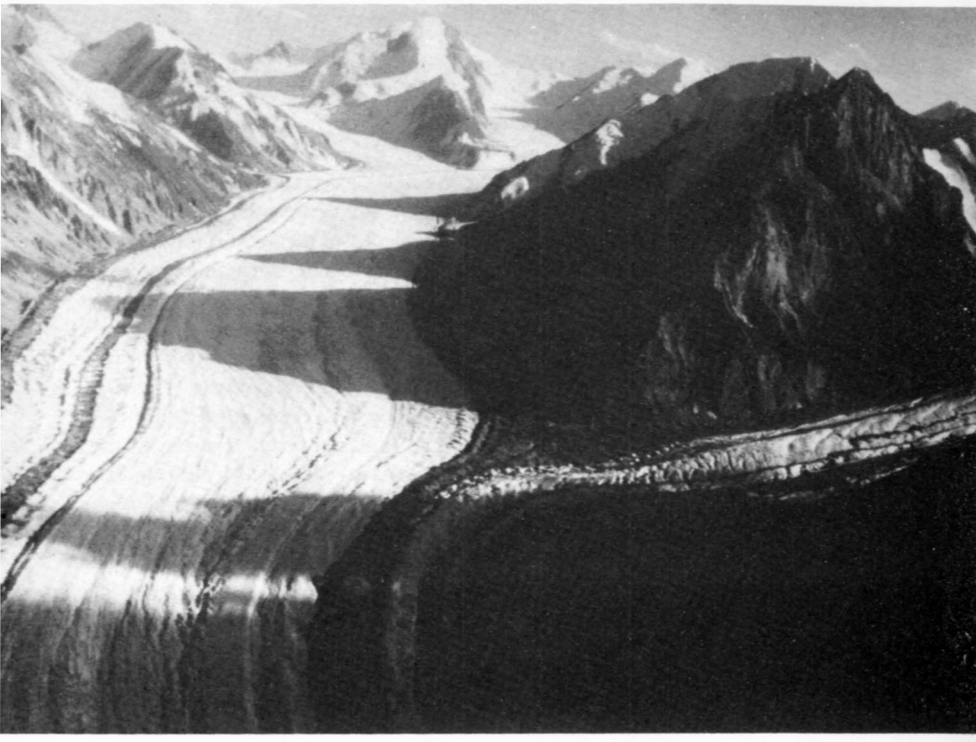
The Alpine Camps have been organized in these areas on a permanent and regular basis. It is suspected that other new regions will become accessible as time goes on. The USSR Mountaineering Federation makes a business of it with the camps resembling package holidays. Such a regular trip lasts 35 days, 30 of which are spent in the mountains while the remaining 5 days are allowed for travelling and a sightseeing tour of Moscow. Aeroflot planes take the visitors within a few hours from the capital to the camp sites. The participants are required to bring their own personal climbing and bivouac equipment, in accordance with the goals to be attempted, but the base camp tents are supplied by the organizers. Also full board and lodging are provided throughout the whole trip with 3 regular meals a day to be enjoyed in dining-rooms arranged under canvas at the base camps or an equivalent in the form of standard packs of the climbers' choice. The base camp staff include some interpreters with a sufficient command of foreign languages thus making available information on routes and climbing conditions. Also medical attention can be obtained on the spot if necessary but the Federation do not wish to accept any responsibility for accidents or any injuries suffered by the climbers who are expected to insure for the period of their stay in the Soviet Union with their own insurance agencies. The total cost of such a trip amounts to about US$1000, payable to the Federation who will be happy to supply application forms on request. Despite the fact that the price does not include travelling expenses to and from the Soviet Union this does not seem to be overmuch, for it gives the participants practical chances to set foot on the summits of 2 or even 3 seven-thousanders, to reach some virgin peaks or to make first or numbered ascents of all grades of difficulty including many problems of the highest standard available.

The 1978 Camp's new Base Camp was erected in Jazgulem Dara valley that leads to the foot of Revolution Peak from the S. The massif of the Peak is the culmination of the Jazgulemskyi Chain stretching for almost 200km from the Ab-i-Panja River on the Afghan border in the W to the head of the Tanymas River in the E. For most of its length the chain runs from SW to NE. It is characterized by a real wealth of



Map 4 The Jazgulem glacier

glaciers with a total superficial area of 770 sq km. Apart from Fedchenko Glacier the biggest of them all, there are 98 others. Towering above the Jazgulem Dara valley the highest section of the main ridge of the chain clasps the upper reaches of the Fedchenko glacier from the S. This is where the Fedchenko glacier, the world's longest outside the polar zones, starts its 71·2km flow. Together with some neighbouring glaciers it forms an ice-field in the SW part of the mountains. In the Jazgulemskyi Chain there rise several peaks exceeding 6000m. Being the fourth highest massif of the Soviet Pamirs, Revolution Peak is the king of them all and culminates in 3 summits situated in 3 corners of a large plateau, 6800 m high, some 4km long and about 3km across. Rising to a height of 6974m above the Fedchenko Glacier the N summit is the highest; the other 2, both at 6950m, are the S one towering above the Revolution Glacier in Jazgulem Dara valley and the E one rising above Grum Grzymajlo Glacier. In practice the 3 summits are independent climbing goals, offering fantastic opportunities for ambitious Alpine assaults. The huge massif of Revolution Peak forms a centre point where gigantic ridges



35 Fedchenko glacier, middle section (This and next 2 photos: J. Maczka)

containing the highest peaks of the chain meet together. To the W there stretches the main ridge of the chain. Its initial 12km section contains the Peak of 26 Bakinsky Commissars 6834m, an unnamed summit at 6002m and the Paris Commune's Peak 6354m which separate the Jazgulem Dara valley from the Fedchenko glacier. Further to the W the ridge turns and runs S for some 30km to reach a beautiful peak named Liap Nazar (5988m) thus forming the W rim of the Jazgulem Dara valley. This long part of the ridge contains several high sharp peaks with steep rock faces, most of them still virgin! From the E summit of Revolution Peak the main ridge of the Jazgulemskyi Chain continues to the E and rises to several peaks exceeding 6500m in height. In the S it terminates Grum Grzymajlo glacier which, at 36.7km, is the second largest glacier of the Pamir Mountains. To the N of the main summit of Revolution Peak there branch out ridges of the S Fedchenko Group and the High Wall Group that are included among the systems of the Jazgulemskyi Chain. They separate the upper reaches of the Fedchenko and Vitkovsky glaciers from the Grum Grzymajlo glacier. As many as 10 peaks exceeding a height of 6000m arise in these 2 groups including Fikkier's Peak (6718m), Grin's Peak (6525m), Krylenko's Peak (6419m) and the High Wall (6300m) among others.

The Jazgulem Dara valley, that we are interested in, approaches the main ridge of the Jazgulemskyi Chain from the S; its upper stretches are filled with a 15km glacier bearing the same name while the valley's E branch approaching the foot of Revolution Peak is covered with a glacier named after the peak. The glacier is the source of the Jazgulem Dara River that feeds the rapid waters of the Bartang River. In the river valley many villages of yurta-huts can be seen. They are inhabited by

Pamirian Tadzhiks whose origin, language, culture and husbandry are closely related to those of Tadzhiks residing in the Afghan part of the Hindu Kush.

A detailed exploration of the area was initiated by the German Rickmer Rickmers expedition of 1928 and continued by a Pamirian Expedition organized by the Soviet Academy of Sciences. Members of the 2 parties are responsible for solving many topographic enigmas of the higher reaches of the Fedchenko glacier. They also became familar with the very complicated orography of the area. It is thanks to them that Revolution Peak was discovered and surveyed. The German expedition mentioned above is covered in the pages of a book titled *Na zooblocznych wysotach* by I. G. Dorofieyev, a Soviet topographer.

As to the chronology, the difficulties and scope of problems attempted in the exploration of Revolution Peak can be divided into 3 different stages. The first parties to visit the area took 8 years, from 1952 till 1960, to reconnoitre a difficult approach route leading along the Grum Grzymajlo glacier to the bottom of the massif of Revolution Peak. The Peak itself had its first ascent in 1954, followed by some more assaults in the fifties, including 2 further successful ascents, one of them being a new route. The 2 routes existing on this side of the mountain are of pure ice-snow character involving little technical difficulties. It seems that there is a chance to reach the top sections of both the routes from the Jazgulem Dara glacier via 2 high passes. This is the easiest way to set foot on the highest summit of the massif—the whole venture requiring about 5 days.

An 1800m rock-face falls from Revolution Peak onto the N side of the Fedchenko glacier. Its ascent in 1962 by a Soviet party marked the second stage of the exploration of the massif. Since that time the route has been repeated only once, probably in 1967, and large stretches of the face remain entirely virgin to the present day.

36 Jazgulem Dara glacier and Pk of 26 Bakinsky Commissars

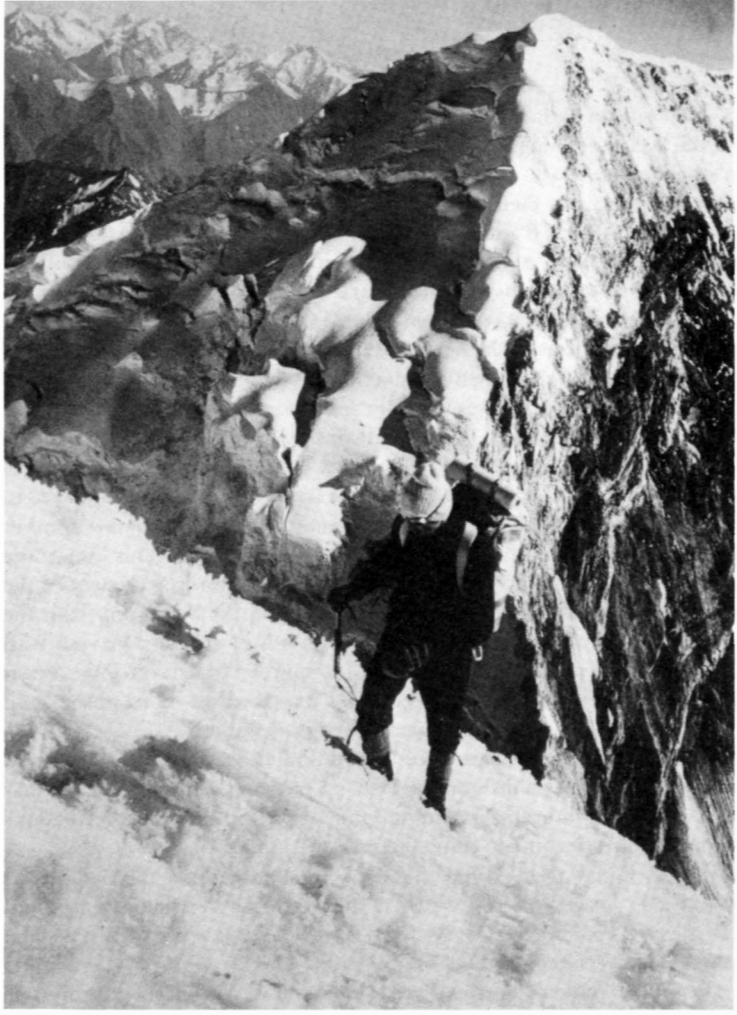


In 1968 the Jazgulem Dara valley saw the first climbing parties approaching the massif from the S thus opening the third, most difficult era of the exploration. The expedition's base camp was put up on the moraine of the glacier and helicopters were employed to transport their supplies. The S face of Revolution Peak, one of the highest precipices of the Pamir mountains, was their goal. The height of this vast rock face amounts to some 2600m. Together with the NE face of the neighbouring Peak of 26 Bakinsky Commissars it creates a gigantic rock cirque closing the upper stretches of Revolution glacier, a branch of the Jazgulem Dara glacier—both described above. The height of the walls surrounding the valley here exceeds the width of the valley itself producing the breath-taking scenery of an enormous rock pit. The faces of this area are metamorphosed sedimentary rocks and on the face of the Revolution Peak is a distinctive monolithic belt of marble. The width of this fantastic face (or a system of S orientated faces to be precise) approximates to 2km. Its right-hand side fell to a party of Soviet mountaineers in 1968, their route ascending to the massif's S summit. The same year saw another successful Soviet team tackling the S ridge of the Revolution Peak. This long route includes a traverse of the main ridge of the Shipka Peak affording scenery of the most dramatic beauty and is the easiest way of reaching the S summit from the Jazgulem Dara valley. Up to a height of some 6800m it is of almost pure rock with technical difficulties varying from Grade II–IV. It requires 5 to 6 days for the ascent while another 3 days are needed for the descent that involves many abseils and some relatively difficult sections with regular belaying advisable.

The third stage of the exploration of Revolution Peak continued, but local climbers have managed to establish on the Peak's S face only 2 more routes so that vast stretches of the amphitheatre including some of the most obvious formations are still calling Alpinists to come to climb them.

In 1969 the SW pillar terminating the right-hand reaches of the S face was climbed and in 1977 the left-hand stretches of the face received a first ascent. The 3 S face routes are each 2500m of pure rock. Almost the entire face is free of snow and ice so all the parties tackling it ran short of water. This is due to a very intense insolation causing the remains of winter snow to melt fast; considering the altitude involved it seems a very rare situation.

In 1978 the International Alpine Camp entertained 2 large groups of Austrian and German Alpinists as well as a strong Polish party of 4 with Janusz Maczka as leader. Wonderful weather and superb climbing conditions prevailed resulting in much climbing of various standards done by the visitors, but Revolution Peak received one ascent only. This was accomplished by the Polish team who were lucky enough to set foot on its S summit, taking a new line up the SW pillar of the S face. Unfortunately, considering the scale of mountains, a former route established on this face in 1969 by a Soviet party reduces the value of the Polish ascent to a repetition but, according to the hosts themselves, it is so far the best climb achieved by foreign climbers in the Soviet Pamir. The Polish tents were erected on a moraine terrace of the Jazgulem Dara glacier at the height of some 3700m, and the climbers' stay in the area lasted 20 days. This included some acclimatization ascents of minor importance followed by the said climb, the crowning touch to their activities. As they did not have enough time for a reconnaissance of their goal and the Revolution glacier does not offer any routes suitable for acclimatization they were forced to decide on the line to be taken on their arrival at the face. Finding it too dangerous to try to establish a new direct route, the prolonged heat-wave increasing a threat of



37 On Revolution Pk with Shipka Pk behind

stone avalanches in the central part of the face, they turned to the safest line and ascended the sound rocks of the SW pillar.

The climb they established starts at the height of 4400m with the rock section continuing up to 6800m, while the complete route works out at 2550m including 2100m of pure rock requiring continuous belaying. They started their climb on 2 August and midday on 6 August saw them tackling the final metres of the route. The same day they descended the S ridge to a height of about 6000m. This part of the way down involved many abseils and scrambling. The continuation of the way back involved an ascent of the N ridge of Shipka Peak which took a whole day because of the difficult rock it presented. The climb did not offer any comfortable bivouac sites so the Poles spent 4 hard nights on the face in the open. The bivouacs occurred at the heights of 4800m, 5700m, 6200m and 6750m. The hardest of these was the top one where the climbers rested on individual tiny ledges, while strong winds rendered it very difficult for them to cook. The line climbed does not involve any extreme difficulties—it is just a 2½km climb, most of it very exposed with rocks of sustained difficulties rating around Grade IV with some points of Grade V and

one pitch graded V+. Much of the more difficult climbing involved was on the rocks of the so-called Marble Belt situated above the second bivouac site. Long sections of loose rocks meant few sound pitons and illusory belaying. All the factors mentioned above coupled with the very long, difficult and dangerous descent of 2½ days make it a route of great scope and really very high standard.

The Polish climb described above is an example of the great opportunities for ambitious mountaineering still available in the Jazgulem Dara valley area. Many new routes are still possible, not only on the S face of Revolution Peak. Apart from the SE face of the neighbouring Peak of 26 Bakinsky Commissars already mentioned there are many untouched 1½km-high faces on the unnamed peaks in the E part of the valley, as well as the Liap Nazar Peak E face which is 2km high. Climbers participating in the International Alpine Camp at Revolution Peak will also enjoy their helicopter flight from the main Base Camp at Lenin Peak to their camp in the Jazgulem Dara valley. This is an obvious attraction because the plane flies for about 200km above the highest and most interesting areas of the Pamirs including the Fedchenko glacier, one of the world's biggest.

The author of this summary material hopes that the information it contains will add to the bibliography of this very interesting area; a complete lack of any data, including even Soviet sources, causes serious problems for foreign visitors. Visited by an increasing number of Alpinists of all the nations the Pamir mountains may soon become a superb yet inexpensive ground for climbers training to tackle the most difficult lines of the Karakoram and Himalaya.

Memories 2

Early years

David Cox

Mountaineering began for me, anyhow in my own imagination (which is what mattered), when I first had Dartmoor on my doorstep after my parents went to live there in 1927. I was then 14, and by the time I was 16 I was religiously keeping mountaineering diaries. These were not only immensely detailed but portentously serious, getting worse and worse in both respects until I was about 21, by which time I was quite an elderly member of the OUMC. It astonishes me now to find that I wrote nearly 8000 words about my first OUMC meet at Helyg in March, 1933, and well over 20,000 words on the 4 weeks' holiday I had in the Scottish Highlands and Skye during the summer of that year. Even more remarkable, a second, and only slightly condensed, version of the same events was subsequently written up in a larger book which I regarded as the official record. This was bound in cheap, red leather, and was much too valuable to be taken with me on holidays.

The same remorseless process of record was applied to visiting OUMC lecturers and to any other well known mountaineers I happened to meet. Not only their utterances were noted, but their physical characteristics as well. No prizes are offered for anyone who can identify 'a dynamic little man, very small' who came and talked to us in 1934 about recent developments in British rock-climbing; but other, more ancient heroes or heroines may be harder to guess. For example: 'aged