

the highest peak of the Kyrgyzskiy Alatau. From July 24-25, Elena Nagovitsina, Tamara Zueva, Alexander Afanasiev and Dmitry Aliadvin put up a new route (5B) via the left spur of the west face.

VLADIMIR SHATAEV, *Russian Mountaineering Federation*

PAMIR-ALAI

Lailak Region

Ak-Su North Peak, North Face, New Route, Previously Unreported. From August 4-12, 1996, Alexander Ruchkin and Alexander Odintsov established The Direct North Face (Russian Grade 6B, 5.11 A3+) on the north face of Ak-Su North (5217m). Practically nobody believed an ascent up the center of the wall was possible. That's why our win was so pleasant. It seemed that the wall was absolutely smooth, without any relief. Micro-relief was observed only after multiple and detailed examinations. The idea was born a long time ago and we thought it over many times. After we had climbed five different routes on the wall, we collected real experience and a kind of data base.

Big wall strategy was used during the ascent. Eight nights were spent on the wall and one on the top. There were no ledges on the route. The climbing was very precise, almost jewellerying, because there were many "live" stones on the route, and at any moment we needed to think about our friend below. We climbed what cracks we could find, which were hardly any. We ascended the center of wall by sky hooks, sometimes drilling holes for them. If we were lucky and found a crack, it was flaring and shallow. Bolts could hold only body weight but not a fall. All protection points were made with Petzl 12-mm screws. We wanted to live badly. Thank you, Petzl. The route is logical and beautiful.

ALEXANDER RUCHKIN, *Russia*

Karavshin Region

Karavashin Region, Various Ascents. After a frustrating visit to the neighboring Lailak region where poor weather stopped us from attempting any big objectives, Mark Pretty and I travelled to the superb granite towers of the Karavashin region. Here we set up camp on August 1 in the Ak-Su Valley with John and Anne Arran, the other half of our British team. Among the four of us we made nine new routes in the valley up to 1300 meters long (all figures are the total sum of the climbing) and 5.12 in difficulty. Of particular note was John and Anne's route *The Philosopher's Stone* (5.12b, 1200m), which takes the quartz veins and overlap right of *The Great Game* (Pritchard-Green, 1997) on the "Wall of Dykes." The first 250 meters of this was fixed over three days and included the two crux pitches, which involved long runouts above sky hooks. The remainder of the route took one and a half days of sustained climbing, including a junction with *The Great Game* for its crux pitch.

While participants in the Russian championships taking place in the area suffered on 12-day repeats of existing routes, Mark and I climbed numerous new routes in conventional, fast, one-day style. We also made two more ascents spread out over one and a half days with *The Big Joke* (5.12a, 1000m), which climbs the Central Pyramid (Pik 3850) 400 meters left of the



Slesova (left) and the "Wall of Dykes," showing 1. The Last Laugh (Parnell-Pretty, 1999). 2. The Great Game (Pritchard-Green, 1997). 3. The Philosopher's Stone (Arran-Arran, 1999). IAN PARNELL

upper section of *Black Magic* (Harvey-Donahue, 1997) and *The Last Laugh* (5.12a, 750m), just to the right of the waterfall on the left-hand side of the "Wall of Dykes."

After Mark departed early due to illness, I free soloed *The Isolationist* (5.10, 1300m) on the east face of Kotin in five hours of climbing (13 hours camp-to-camp). For the nine first ascents, we placed a total of four pegs and one hand-drilled bolt, a contrast to many of the recent routes by European visitors. The team eventually departed on September 1, a week earlier than planned, due to an invasion by Taliban guerillas from Afghanistan who kidnapped a Japanese party trekking in the area.

IAN PARNELL, *United Kingdom*

Peak 4810, East Face, New Route. Alexander Pogorelov and Vitaly Polohov from Rostov-on-Don established a new route (6B, 1100m) on the east face of Peak 4810, fixing the initial pitches of the route from August 4-11, then climbing it from August 14-22. All four routes on the east face of 4810 (Vedernikov, 1989; Sitnik, 1989; Klionov, 1993; Odintsov, 1995) are on the right-hand side of the face. The Pogorelov Route takes a line close to the center of the face.

While we were preparing the route, we noticed that the most dangerous part of the face is