

took two days. From the bergschrund at 4900 meters to the beginning of vertical rock sections at 5600 meters, we climbed about 25 pitches; snow/sleet didn't hamper us. Avalanches scoured the bottoms of the couloirs.

On the third day, one look was enough to see that the inside corner of our intended route was dangerous due to rockfall. My suggestion to descend two pitches and outflank the dangerous section by ascending the left buttress received a cool welcome. The next day was characterized by heavy damage to our portaledges, a broken helmet, and a traumatized head. Nevertheless, the decision to continue the route prevailed. The next two days, which were full of snowfall and wet snow avalanches, changed nothing. On July 25, Rutchkin and I worked with fixed ropes. A rock knocked off by Rutchkin and Efimov hit both my hands where they were holding the jumars. Odintsov established the fracture of both my thumbs.

On July 26, leaving behind some gear for another attempt, my friends began to bring me down. For the first time in two weeks, it was really sunny.

The lower couloir was the most dangerous because of the speed of the avalanches, which had been rushing by like subway trains. In some places, the couloir was too close to the rocks and we had no choice but to descend. I had waited for the next pause and rushed across the couloir. The next avalanche started when I was one pitch below the belay station. I saw only Odintsov. He stayed in his place without moving. There then appeared a wet Rutchkin without his rucksack and Odintsov. They yelled that Efimov had been swept away by an avalanche. I saw that Efimov sat on an avalanche cone 300 meters below us. He seemed to be alive. The avalanche had torn Efimov and the rucksacks from the belay station. Rutchkin was almost suffocated by the snow and ice that packed beneath his helmet. As we found out later, Efimov came to after the shock, radioed Doctor Bakin in BC about the avalanche, and told him that the other members of the expedition were probably dead.

A rescue effort followed. Efimov had been lucky, surviving with one terribly broken leg. The injuries to his ribs, the other leg, and his forehead were trifles in comparison. After we put Efimov's legs in a cast, the mountain sent us a last greeting: a huge rock fell from the summit and slammed into the avalanche cone 20 meters away.

Doctor Bakin, Odintsov and Rutchkin spent several nights with Efimov on the glacier. There was a lot of work with the loads. I began to forget about my fingers. Alexander Rutchkin had three broken ribs and an injured neck. On July 30, a helicopter arrived and took Efimov and Doctor Bakin to Skardu.

YURI KOSHELENKO, *Russia*

## Baltoro Muztagh

*Shipton Spire, Akelarre, New Route.* The expedition took place throughout July and August. After nine days, preparing in Rawalpindi and journeying to Skardu, Jose Ramón Ezquibel, Jokin Larrañaga and I arrived in Askole, met the porters and began the four-day trek to Shipton Spire base camp. Once we had finished carrying all the gear, we set up Advance Base Camp on the shoulder of the mountain, where we found platforms of the previous American expeditions to this big wall of the Karakoram. We soon became fascinated by the line that led up the pillar of the 1992 American attempt and where, two years later, Ryuchi Taniguchi had fallen more than 500 meters, leaving his two packs behind on the wall.

On July 10, we began to climb, fixing around 400 meters of rope up to a small ledge. We overcame some fine crack stretches without any extreme difficulty. From here we began the

hard task of pulling up the bags. Once we had set up the portaledge, we began the next wall, where we encountered two pretty difficult pitches, with the odd expanding flake, until we reached Taniguchi's bags. From then on, the climb became easier, with good crack pitches stretching up to a roof some 300 meters above Camp 1. Here we set up Camp II and continued through a lovely offwidth and a logical system of corners up to the top ledge, from which the Americans had continued in their attempt to reach the summit. On the top ledge, we set up Camp III, some 900 meters from the ground. Here the final wall started with an initial pitch of difficult nailing, which led to an obvious exit corner. This zone, which was fairly overhanging, had various expanding, totally loose features, which fortunately could be got around without being touched.

After arriving at the summit edge, which joins the *Ship of Fools* route to the summit, we were held up by a five-day storm in Camp III. Time and food ran out, and with the improvement of the weather we collected the fixed ropes and began our descent without having completed the route, which we have named *Akelarre* (6b A4, 1150m).

ALVARO ORTIZ, *Spain*

*Cat's Ears Spire, Hainabrakk East Tower, and Shipton Spire, Ascents.* In July and August, Mike Pennings and Jonathan Copp took advantage of brief weather windows and a light-weight approach to climb three routes, two of which were new and one of which was the first ascent of a peak. From July 15-17, the pair made the first ascent of Cat's Ears Spire (ca. 18,800') via the route *Freebird* (VI 5.11d A1, 3,500'); from July 26-28 they established the new route *Tague it to the Top* (VI 5.11 C2, 3,700') on the east face of Hainabrakk East Tower (ca. 19,024') for the second ascent of the peak; and on Shipton Spire (a.k.a. Hainabrakk Central Tower, 19,700'), they made the second ascent of the route *Inshallah* (VII 5.12 A1, 4,300') from August 4-6. A full account of their expedition appears earlier in this journal.

*Hainabrakk East Tower, First Ascent.* The married couples of Steve Schneider and Heather Baer, and Brian McCray and Roxanna Brock made the first ascent of Hainabrakk East Tower (ca. 19,024') from June 25-July 27 via the route *For Better or for Worse* (VII 5.12a WI3, 3,500'). The story of their climb appears earlier in this journal.

*Great Trango Tower and Trango Nameless Tower, Attempts.* During July and August, Miles Smart and I spent almost 50 days camped atop a lateral moraine on the Trango Glacier. We departed the U.S. on June 24 and arrived in Pakistan two days later. After a week of rummaging through the seething markets and racing streets of Rawalpindi and listening to the bureaucratic loop tape of Islamabad, we headed north to Skardu. Two jeeps carried us to the first of two natural roadblocks on the way to Askoli, forcing us to porter our loads past a river-ravaged section of the road and across a raging creek. (The jeep travel was perhaps the most dangerous part of our trip.) We chose our porters while a police official wildly swung a stick to drive the extremely eager porters away. Three days later, we were at base camp. We camped at the toe of our intended line of ascent: the southwest ridge of Great Trango Tower. The weather was unusually unstable this season and provided three distinct weather windows, one of five days and two of three days.

We established a high camp at the col between Great Trango Tower and Trango Nameless Tower. We climbed the snow and ice (up to 80°) that leads to the west summit of Great Trango