

Russia

Muiskey Range, Pik Casteldefels, Salo; Pik 2,600m, Corredor Cor. Curro Gonzales, Vicente Holgado, and I, forming the second X-PLORE expedition, left Madrid on February 21 and flew to Chita in the Republic of Buryatia (Buryatskaya). Our goal was the south face of the highest peak, Muiskey Giant (3,067m), southeast of Lake Baikal. We were joined by three Russians, Anton, Roma, and Dima, who had climbed it before in an eight-day winter siege.

We drove 32 hours on rough roads and tracks, then continued for several days on the frozen riverbed of Van Uvika. Leaving the vehicle, we set out on skis across the taiga with huge loads, camping several times, and eventually caching our skis and reserves of food (tied to high branches to safeguard against wolves). We finally reached base camp in a cirque of magnificent mountains, many unnamed. As the weather was relatively good, though windy, Gonzales, Holgado, and I set off the next day and pitched tents below Muiskey Giant's east face. The following day we took six hours to reach a campsite below the south face, where we were pinned down by three days of snowfall. The thermometer once registered -47°C . Our gas cylinders froze, and it was impossible to melt snow and rehydrate. We made a brief foray toward the mountain before deciding that enjoying the experience was more important than reaching the summit. We descended toward the river, where we would be able to make a fire and something to drink.

However, during the descent we saw a virgin peak of 2,700m and decided to try it. It took just a few hours to reach the summit of Pik Casteldefels (our name) via a 400m line that we dubbed Salo (70° M4), the Russian word for the white bacon devoured with all meals during the winter. This summit lies just left of Fox Peak. We climbed to the base of a Y-shaped couloir, took the right branch, and continued up steep ground that became more mixed toward the top.

We spent another night out before meeting up with our Russian friends at the river camp. They had unfrozen cylinders and we drank and ate. After a rest, during which time we dried ourselves and our gear in front of a large wood fire, we set off for an unnamed peak of 2,600m. We broke trail through deep snow to a couloir on the southwest face and climbed its flanks to the summit. We named our 1,100m route Corredor Cor (60° UIAA IV+), after my father. On the summit we enjoyed a panorama of many small unexplored peaks, but also saw that we were not the first ascensionists, though probably the first in winter. We were likely the first non-Soviets to climb in this area, and saw huge potential for new routes, including walls up to 700m high.

GERARD VAN DEN BERG, *Spain*, translated by MIKE YOKELL

Kyrgyzstan

PAMIR ALAI – KARAVSHIN

Liayliak Valley, Pik 4,600m, north face. During the summer Taras Cushko, Sasha Homenko, and I (Lavrinenko) from Odessa put up a new route on the north face of Pik 4,600m. There was only one line on this face, the Bashkirov Route, which diagonals up the left side of the wall. A direct line up the center of the face beckoned. We spent two days carrying equipment from our base camp to

