

Bukovinskiy Pass. This had been previously climbed by a Belarus team. Snow fell and we returned to Base Camp on August 5 in unpleasant conditions. On August 7, we evacuated Base Camp and moved over the Shatier, Bukovinskiy (2550 meters) and Kiureterskiy (2500 meters) Passes to the Obruchev Glacier, ascending en route previously climbed Sovetskaya Yakutiya (2885 meters) via north ridge from Kiureterskiy Pass. Inger, Kentish and I made the ascent. On August 8, Doyle and Kentish made the first ascent of Bieliy Parus (2821 meters) via the north face, while Inger and I climbed a probable new route on Gora Pobeda (3147 meters), the highest in the region, via a couloir from the south leading to the west ridge. All heights are the "traditional" ones. These appear on all maps and information available until recently, including the sketch map of the 1990 Polish team and the 1988 Russian trekking guide. They differ from the formerly secret Russian survey maps and were found inconsistent with altimeter readings. The walk out to the Pobeda gold mine lasted nine days and was a gruelling slog across tundra. A strict daily schedule had to be maintained to ensure meeting the Yakutsk flight on August 17; on most days this meant doing 25 kilometers.

PAUL KNOTT, *Alpine Club*

*Mongun Taiga, Tuva, Southern Siberia, 1993.* Our expedition's main objective was to unify the separate disciplines of mountain-biking and mountaineering in the hinterlands of central Asia, namely in the remote corners of the Republic of Tuva in southern Siberia, northwestern Mongolia and the Altai Mountains. Isolated Tuva, a mountain-girt basin, gives rise to one of the world's great rivers, the Yenisey, which flows over 4000 miles to the Arctic. Although the size of the state of Washington, its population remains only 300,000. It is the one Siberian republic where the indigenous Siberians still outnumber the ethnic Russians. Primarily nomadic herders, Tuvans keep reindeer, camels and yaks as well as more prosaic sheep, goats and cattle. Although of Mongolian heritage, they speak a form of Turkish. They live in yurts or birchbark teepees and practice a religion combining Tibetan Buddhism and Siberian shamanism. After several adventures in Tuva and Mongolia and some minor ascents, I was joined by Peter Bogardus and Randy Hibbitts for the second stage of the expedition. On August 15, 1993, the three of us embarked on a 600-mile bike ride west from Tuva through the heart of the Altai Mountains and then into Kazakhstan, along dirt tracks which often disappeared into mud bogs or forked unexpectedly and which, for much of the way, ran parallel to and as little as five miles from the Mongolian and then the Chinese border. In the sparsely inhabited area, we had to carry plenty of food and fuel. For the first leg of the journey, we were accompanied by a Tuvan named Mirgen, who had ridden his bike over parts of our route and who had climbed Mongun Taiga (3957 meters, 12,980 feet), the highest mountain in Tuva and indeed in eastern Siberia excluding Kamchatka. We rode south from Kyzyl, Tuva's capital, to Chadan and then turned south along the road that leads to Mongolia. Before

reaching the border, we turned west again onto the dirt road to Mongun Taiga through gorgeous steppe valleys in which nomadic herders lived year-round. One group of families honored our arrival by slaughtering a yak and rewarded (?) us with a hearty bowl of yak soup. Despite flat tires and mechanical breakdowns, after five days we reached Mugur Aksy, the town closest to Mongun Taiga, where we replenished our food and fuel. The day after we arrived, we rode the 30 kilometers to some yurts at the base of the peak, where herders warmly welcomed us with a platter of marmot. Fleas on marmots had caused an outbreak of bubonic plague, but we figured cooked marmot was safe. Early the next morning, we set off for the climb. A beautiful mass of a mountain with a round, snow-covered summit, Mongun Taiga towers 4000 feet higher than anything else in the region. The route was straightforward and not technical. We ascended the south face, first along a moraine that ran up to the snout of the big glacier. There Mirgen lit an incense offering to the spirit of the mountain; although the Tuvans call themselves Buddhist, old animist ways die hard. We continued up steep scree gullies left of the glacier to the end of the rock and up steep snow slopes to where the two main glaciers meet. From there, we roped up and followed the glacier's gentle grade to the summit. From the flat top, we had a tremendous 360° view, from Khindiktig Khol, the big lake to the north, to the Turgun Mountains of Mongolia to the south. We descended a different route to the west and ended up back at the yurts, shattered after a 13-hour day with a 6000-foot rise. This was probably the first non-Soviet ascent of the mountain. Following the climb, Mirgen left us and we continued on our way to Kazakhstan. Our route curled around the east and north sides of Mangun Taiga, where we spied more challenging routes.

SHEPARD KOPP

*Borkoldoy Region of the Central Tien Shan, Kirghizstan.* A mountaineering and trekking group of five Russians and six British (Marion Elmes, Mike Parsons, Larry Hootton, Jane Sanderson, Alan Martley and I) spent three weeks exploring the Borkoldoy region (41°15'N, 77°45'E) during August. We reached the area with a six-wheel-drive truck from Lake Issyk-kul to the north. The peaks were alpine in size and character, mainly a shade under 5000 meters. We climbed eight virgin summits. Snow conditions were generally poor and snow arêtes particularly difficult. Kirghiz nomads occupy most of the major valleys in the summer months. There are snow leopards, wolves and bears as well as sheep, goats and horses. The high valleys are grassland and superb walking and riding country. The weather was generally alpine—mixed and unsettled, but no storms lasted more than a day.

PHILIP BARTLETT, *Alpine Club*

*Pik Olympia, Tien Shan, Kirghizstan.* The UIAA (International Union of Alpine Associations), which represents 77 mountaineering associations world-