

planned. We bailed.

We then tried the least-steep of the wild formations that form the jagged walls of the Ak-Su Valley: Peak "1,000 Years of Russian Christianity" (4507 m), a Patagonianesque formation with a doable-looking north ridge. A brunch of mystery meat stayed with us up the 2,000-foot scree slog to the north col, which we achieved at dusk. Mathais, who was meant to bring our water supply, was nowhere to be seen, and after a putrid meal of Russian pasta we zipped ourselves into our tent. An hour later I was clutching at the zippers, attempting to empty my stomach of the morning's meal. I continued in that undignified position for the rest of the night, and in the morning Brady graciously took all my weight and we stumbled back to camp.

After a day of recovery we did one more route to the right of our first, finding again the shiny bolts of French persuasion. The weather had been stellar, and what climbing we had done was good, though the granite had not been as nice as what we had found earlier in the Ala Archa.

The walls of the Ak-Su valleys were discovered in 1982 by an aerial reconnaissance, and climbers began exploring them a year later. Though we were only the third or fourth American party to the region, Russian climbers (in respectable numbers) have been plucking the plums since 1983, and Europeans have been climbing there since 1991. It seems that our September stay was a bit off-season, for we saw no other climbers; reportedly, as many as a few hundred had been in the area during June and July. Still, the region is magnificent, featuring numerous 2,000- to 4,000-foot walls, no peak fees, and splitter weather.

CHRISTIAN BECKWITH, *The Wayward Mountaineers*

*Ak-Su Valley, Various Ascents.* It was reported that in September, 1995, the French team of P. Caribo, J.P. Calvet and A. Robert spent three weeks in the Ak-Su Valley, repeating *Perestroika Crack* on Slessova Peak after two days of preparation. The team also managed an eight-pitch variation to the right of *Sugar Daddy* on Peak 1000 years of Russian Christianity (4520 m). (GHM 1995-1996)

*Peak 4810, East Face.* It was reported that the northeast face of 4810 was climbed by Alexander Odintsov and Igor Borihin from St. Petersburg via the *Directissima* (EDsup VI+ A4) in August, 1995. [While the report refers to the face climbed as being the northeast face, it was actually the magnificent east face, accessed directly from the Ak-Su valley, that was ascended-Ed.] The team transported their equipment to the base of the face on August 7. Climbing began on the 8th; the team chose to ascend the very center of this massive 1100-meter wall. Their ten day, 58-pitch climb entailed rock and icefall that whistled by far behind them and the cleaning of 5-10 centimeters of sand at certain points lower down on the climb. (GHM 1995-1996).

*Peak 4810, Northwest Face.* It was reported that Viktor Komarov, Kostya Sakharov, Anatoli Vinokurov and Alexander Shcherbakov climbed the vertical to overhanging 1200-meter-plus Red Pillar on the northwest face of Peak 4810 in mid-July, 1994. Three previous attempts on this incredible wall had been made unsuccessfully, one, in 1993, by Komarov, Sakharov and Vinokurov. The three plus Shcherbakov began up the line of their previous attempt, fixing nine pitches up the steep slabs in two days, at first using bolts from a 1992 Dutch attempt. They encountered difficulties of 5c and a short section of A3. On July 28 they pulled their ropes and hauled to their first bivy at the top of Pitch 14. Above, a few sections of free climbing led to a large roof where they were unable to locate the line of their previous attempt and placed bolts

through a smooth overhanging wall to reach easier ground above. From there they averaged three or four pitches a day until they reached the north ridge on the seventh day. Above, the angle eased considerable, and the team reached the summit the next day. They climbed the wall capsule-style, placing 45 bolts on the 33 pitches to the summit ridge plus another 15-20 shallow holes for rivets or hooks. The route received an overall grade of 6b A3. (*High Mountain Sports* 165)

*Peak 4810, Various Ascents.* It was reported that on the 1100-meter east face of 4810 two significant routes were established in 1995. M. Astakhov, A. Kniazhev, Y. Koshelenko and A. Popov from Rostovna-Donu made the second ascent of the 6B Klenov route. The St. Petersburg team of I. Barikhin and A. Odintsov put up an even more demanding 6B route on the face as well. (*High Mountain Sports* 165)

## TIEN SHAN

### Ala Archa National Park

*Kyrgyzskiy Alatau Mountains, Various Ascents.* At the end of August, Brady Van Matre and I traveled to Kyrgyzstan with the intention of climbing Khan Tengri in the Tien Shan mountains. We arrived in time to drink vodka with the Russian guides who had pulled camp in the South Inylchek Glacier the day before. Winter had come to the Tien Shan, and we were forced to turn our inebriated attentions elsewhere. Our altered itinerary was not without its merits.

The Ala Archa National Park in the Kyrgyzskiy Alatau mountains rises out of the foothills of Bishkek, the nation's capitol, in dramatic serrations of rock and ice. Though they are less than 5000 meters in altitude, they are readily accessible, offer exquisite rock, ice and mixed objectives, and, due to the devastating effects perestroika has had on the Kyrgyz economy, are almost never crowded. The climate is cool, but stable, and three climbers' huts built over the years by the climbers of Bishkek offer a dry, if somewhat squalid, place to cook and sleep.

On August 25, we took a 40-minute car ride to the park entrance, then walked five hours to the first of the huts. The next day we continued up the Ak-Sai glacier to a second hut, where we set up camp for five days. We spent our time gawking at the alpine cathedrals, and managed to make ascents of the following: the 1986 Yugoslav route (IV AI 4), a stellar 2,000-foot ice couloir on a peak to the right of Iziskatel (4400 m), in one day from camp; descent was made via the moderate north slopes and couloirs of Ak-Too Peak (4620 m). A couple of days later we climbed up the Korona glacier (45° at its steepest), and, after the sun had warmed our frozen digits, climbed a three-pitch route we suspected was new (5.9) on Korona's rock crown (4860 m). We made one more ascent, a two-pitch 5.9 on the way out of the valley at the end of the week.

The Alatau mountains are a Chamonix on a smaller scale; we found the ice to be superlative, the rock magnificent, and the setting sublime. Unless you speak Russian, getting info on routes is a fool's errand. All our objectives in Kyrgyzstan were approached with a first ascent mentality. Though few probably were, no one who spoke English dissuaded us otherwise. It was one of the cooler aspects of the trip.

CHRISTIAN BECKWITH, *The Wayward Mountaineers*

*Pic Korona, Various Ascents.* It was reported that I. and V. Plotnikov and V. Sergeev from Barnaul in Central Siberia climbed a new route (5A) in the winter on the west spur of Korona and another route (5B) up a series of icefalls on the northwest face. (*High Mountain Sports* 165)