

On the 21st the wind died and Wielicki decided to go up for the final attempt. It was the only chance. Jurek Natkanski and Jacek Jawien went first. Their task was to check camps and supply them. Next day Kaczkan and Urubko, both without oxygen, began the ascent. They planned to put 200m of fixed rope above camp 4, then maybe attempt the summit. The same day Natkanski and Jawien turned back from the rock barrier, due to considerable stone and ice fall.

On 25th it started to snow and the wind increased. However, Marcin and Denis reached camp 4 still hoping they would fix some ropes above. However, they found the tent destroyed, so they were forced to use a small bivouac tent, which they had carried for the summit push. They both spent a terrible night in one sleeping bag, lying on coiled ropes as they had no insulated mats.

Kaczkan was totally exhausted by the effort over the last few days and during the night began to deteriorate. In the morning after a radio call to the doctor, Urubko recognized that Kaczkan had cerebral oedema. He was unable to wake and the situation seemed serious. Camp 4 was an altitude record for Kaczkan (his previous record was achieved on a solo ascent of 7,439m Pik Pobeda during the past summer). A rescue operation was begun. Everybody who was still able to go above Base Camp did so, and a bottle of oxygen was taken to Camp 2. Fortunately, after a few hours of effort by Denis, Kaczkan was able to move and get dressed. Both climbers started to descend and Kaczkan became stronger with every meter of height loss. When ca 200m above camp 3 they both met Wielicki and all three carried on down. By the afternoon they had reached camp 2, where Kaczkan used the oxygen carried up by Teler and Duda. All five descended to camp 1 where they met Zielinski and Natkanski. These last two and Kaczkan spent the night at this camp and after a good sleep on oxygen, Kaczkan was able to descend unaided the following day.

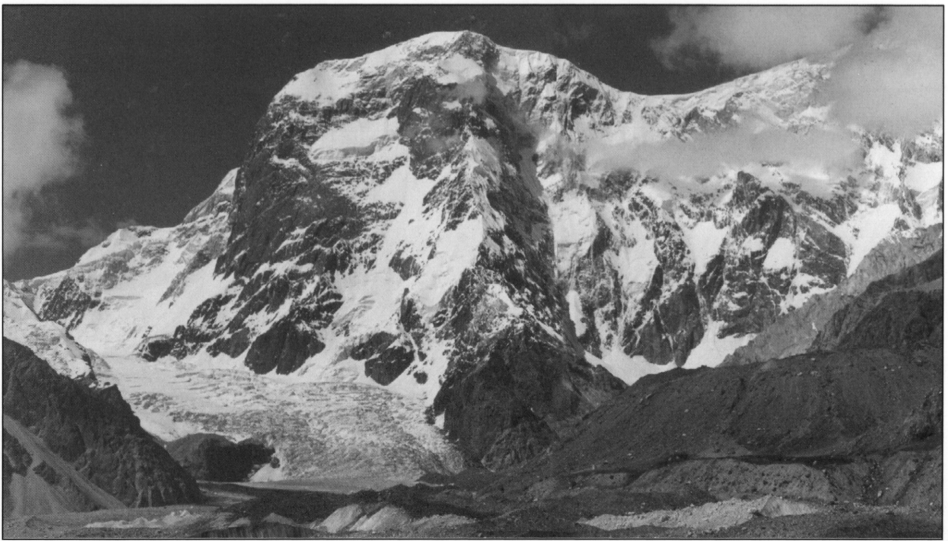
On the 27th Wielicki called off the expedition. The next day the wind was so strong that it destroyed our mess tent at base camp. Over the subsequent days, while most members were descending to the Chinese base camp, all the other tents were destroyed by the wind. The expedition returned to Warsaw on March 18. Although K2 has once more held out in winter, this expedition showed that a successful ascent is possible..

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*Chinese Tien-Shan Range, reconnaissance.* Four of us—Anatoly Dzhulie (leader), David Lekhtman, Vladimir Leonenko, and myself, Otto Chkhetiani—explored the remote Tien-Shan mountains of China, on the other side of the Kok-Shaal-Too Range. We covered a total of 270km and traversed seven high passes during a 36-day trek in July and August, 2002.

Beginning with very little information—just old Soviet maps (1:100,000) and satellite photos—we crossed into Irkeshtam on July 12, struggled with the red tape, and traveled across Kashgar to Aksu. Then we drove across a rocky plain toward the Kirghiz village of Talak, where we registered with the military authorities and met our Kirghiz guide. Accompanied by a caravan of four horses, we crossed a low pass at Kok-Yar-Davan into Chon-Teren-su, a deep forested valley. There, we found traces of Chinese expeditions from the late 1970s, the remains of a road, and a large wood hut at the mouth of Sajlyn-su.

We left our caravan and guides at the convergence of the western and eastern branches of the Chon-Teren glacier (3,462m), and headed into a completely deserted area. Since there was almost no vegetation, there were no local shepherds—nor any hunters, since hunting is



The 2,000m southwestern wall of unclimbed Peak Voennykh Topografov. Otto Chkhetiani

forbidden in China.

Originally, we had planned to travel west to visit the Tomur Glacier, which lay beyond a range of rugged mountains. But heavy snowfall and avalanche danger slowed us down, so we diverted to the tributaries of the west fork of the Chon-Teren Glacier. We crossed three technical ice passes to bypass icefalls, then crossed a plateau (5,600m) south of massive Peak 6,435 (cf. Koxkar Feng, attempt, AAJ 1990, p. 347), and north of Peak 6,050. From the plateau, a wide ridge with several rocky peaks led to the highest point. This area is dominated by the impressive southern wall of Tomur 7439 (Peak Pobeda). To the east we could see a lot of alpine terrain and Peak 6,571, an impressive unclimbed mountain.



Peak 6747 in the Chinese Tien Shan. Otto Chkhetiani

After completing Western Chon-Teren circuit, we climbed the eastern branch of Chon-Teren. We had no information about this part of the glacier, since it was not explored during the 1970s. From the right moraine, we saw grassy meadows and small lakes. The 2,000m southwestern wall of unclimbed Peak Voennykh Topografov towered over the glacier. Combined with Peak 6,747, this wall makes the Southern Inyl'chek Glacier inaccessible from the north.

We encountered high winds and waist-deep snow on the pass Chon-Teren (5,488m), which is well known to climbers approaching from the north—the side of the Zvezdochka Glacier. But we had no information at all about its southern slopes, where we found large cornices

overhanging a 55°, 300m ice slope with protruding rocks. To the left loomed Vostochnaya Pobeda, which frequently avalanches, covering the glacier with snow dust and ice debris.

From the upper reaches of Southern Inyl'chek, we continued across a pass (5,300m) between Peak Druzhba and Peak Richarda Zorge. We decided to name the pass after the outstanding Russian and Kazak alpinist Valerii Khrishchaty, who in 1990 made an unprecedented traverse from Peak Vazha Pshavela—crossing Peak Pobeda, Peak Voennykh Topografov, and the Meridional Ridge—to the Vostochnyi (Eastern) Schater.

A huge cornice overhung east of the col, so we decided to descend the north end of the ridge, where an 800m long, 40° to 55° ice slope led to a small plateau that ended at an ice-fall. We finished the descent by sidestepping the ice-fall by going through a 700-meter ice couloir, then onto the Tugabel'chi Glacier. As far as we know, we were the first people to visit this glacier, which is very different from the Inyl'chek area and the Chon-Teren. The air was much drier, and the glaciers were covered with seracs.

To the northeast, we saw an unknown, yellowish 6,000m peak, which was part of the eastern extension of the Tengri-Tag range. We headed onto the first southern tributary, under the southern slope of Peak 6,342. The satellite photos had not been able to foretell the difficulties we encountered there: and very complex ice-fall, which took two very tense days to get through. Then we spent the next 24 hours in a blizzard!

At our final pass, Tugabel'chi (5,200m), we had to descend 350 meters of vertical granite to get out of the cirque (the map showed only ice slopes, and the satellite photographs were no help). At the same time, we had to deal with avalanches from Peak 6,342.

Finally, on our long march out on the Kichi-Teren glacier, then through woods at 3,200m, we encountered a group of surprised Kirghiz locals, who had never seen Europeans before.

OTTO CHKHETIANI, RUSSIA (*translated by Henry Pickford*)

## SICHUAN

*Minya Konka, eighth ascent and new route on nearby Eva Shan.* If you love sunny places, Sichuan isn't the area of your dreams. The climbers of French High Mountain Military Group went there last autumn to climb Minya Konka (or Gongga Shan 7,556m). They spent one month at base camp (4,400m) as there were only 4 days of good weather during which reach the summit. We didn't acclimatize well and there was really a lot of fresh snow. Only two days after arriving at base camp, most of the climbers had already climbed one of the two acclimatisation peaks: Gomba (5,605m) or Nochma (5,575m). Laurent did a paragliding flight from the summit of Nochma. But the day after this, came the snow. They stayed above us for 10 days. We could only walk around base camp. Our main activities were to dig a path into the snow, eating, sleeping, reading, and playing cards, all significant expeditionary skills. Nevertheless, Greg and Manu climbed a gully on Eva Shan 5,705m (Eva is Greg's daughter) Plate-forme (800m, D+).

We gave up our first project, which had been to climb a new route on the southwest ridge of Minya Konka. On October 6th, six climbers returned to and slept at the high point reached earlier, 5,700m. The day after, they climbed into deep snow to 6,300m and put camp 3 behind the "hump." From the top of the "hump," at 6,400m, we rappelled. The third day, at 3:00 a.m., Philippe, Thomas, the two Laurents, François, and Antoine left camp. Four of us had to stop around 7,000m because we were poorly acclimatized. Laurent M. climbed up to 7,400m carry-