

the wall, or over the snow and ice to the right side over the southeast fissure. This direct variant was taken as more beautiful and as a bigger challenge. Two unsuccessful tries followed. First one ended in the ABC camp, and the second one in the direct variant beneath the rock level, 300 meters under the top of the wall, because of the bad conditions (too thin, husk ice) and technical difficulties (they did not have enough equipment to get to the upper part of the wall).

The team did have success on the third try. They arrived to ABC cave in bad weather again, but in the evening a marvelous night with a full moon followed. Visibility was excellent. They started climbing at 11 p.m. Unattached the group progressed quickly and at the sunrise they were already 100 meters beneath the first snowdrift (at the height of 5,800 meters). Over it they discovered an interesting and difficult passage through a kind of snow-ice chimney. Wading in snow up to the waist on a slope followed. The exit over the last snowdrift and they were on the pre-peak Gorky, at around 6,000m. Because of approaching bad weather, they started to descend the south ridge (in the direction of the first-ascent in 1962), but that was hardly possible, with hollow snow up to the waist and snowdrift. Consequently they descended into the southern part of the wall after 200 meters. For some time the night descent took place in catastrophic weather conditions. It grew calmer in the lower part of the wall so they could descend directly into base camp. In the ideal conditions (shadow, good weather) the wall is really calm, but as soon as it starts snowing or the wall is touched by the sun, it comes alive. That is why they climbed the wall mostly at night. You can climb the wall at least over two more beautiful and logical lines: over the line of their first attempt (in better conditions) and the line of their descent.

Slovenija Direkt: climbed in two days (Aug. 11-12, 2003) on the south face of Peak Gorky, by Ales Cesen, Anze and Tine Marence, and Darko Podgornik (1,700m, V-VI, 5, 90°/50-65°). After successful climbing Peak Gorky (by the way named after Maxim Gorky, famous Soviet writer of early XX century) and short rest just enough time was left to try the to scale neighbor Khan-Tengri peak (7,010m) via normal route from South. This time the tour took three days. The first day they started from ABC at 4,200m and reached camp 3 (5,800m) near the West saddle between Khan-Tengri and Chapayev peak (6,371m). The second day they reached the summit (7,010m) and descended back to camp 3. The third day the team returned to the base camp and from there on flew with the helicopter the following day, back to the valley.

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KOKSHAAL- TOO

Borkolday Range, first ascents. The Borkoldoy range is a limestone massif situated north of the Dankova region of the West Kokshaal-Too. Apart from British expeditions in 1995 and 2002, which operated in the northeast and southwest corners of the group, the range is little-explored by mountaineers. In September 2003 an ISM expedition comprising Adrian Nelhams and myself (guides), Tony Allen, James Bruton, Jo da Silva, Steve Kempley, Nigel Kettle, Clive McCafferty, Neil Sutcliffe, and Jane Whitmore (expedition doctor), set up base camp at the head of the Kynar Valley. This long curving valley cuts deeply into the southeast part of the range, and on its south side is the massif dominated by Pik 5,060m, a giant rocky peak taking the form of a narrow crest running north to south.

First reconnaissance was made up the canyons either side of Pik 5,060m, and ABC

established on the west side at 4,130m. From here Nelhams, Kettle, Allen & Sutcliffe traversed the fine mixed peak at the top of the canyon (Peak Mars, 4,905m, AD) while Bruton, da Silva, McCafferty, Whitmore, and I climbed the neighboring Peak Virgo (4,744m). Nelhams' team then attempted the fortress-like peak north of Peak Mars, but was stopped by a 50m barrier of steep compact rock near the summit. Bruton, da Silva, and I tried the huge north ridge of Pik 5,060m. We traversed its first summit (Mramorney Cupol [Marble Dome] 4,700m), but an hour beyond this they were stopped by a deep breech which would have been very difficult and time-consuming to cross. This peak remains a major and challenging objective.

The expedition then moved around to more accessible peaks on the north side of the range (two valleys west of the area explored by the 1995 British expedition) and enjoyed more success. Base camp was established in the Chon Tor valley, which divides higher up into two glaciated valleys. The team split and moved up to ABCs high on each glacier. From the east glacier Nelhams, Allen, Kempley, Kettle, and Sutcliffe climbed the southeast ridge of PE Peak (4,740m, PD), the west ridge of Peak Obsorny (4,914m, AD), and the south ridge of Gromovoy (Thunder) Peak (4,840m, PD+). They came close to success on the prominent triple-summitted peak forming the east side of the valley, turning back due to avalanche danger. At the head of this glacier a superb snow peak characterized by soaring corniced ridges remains unclimbed.

From the western glacier Bruton, McCafferty, and I, with a second rope of da Silva, Whitmore, and Russian companion Sasha Miyusov, climbed the southwest ridge of Peak Tomos (4,869m, AD), the beautifully symmetrical snow peak that dominates the glacier. Another classic summit—Shutnik (Jester) 4,890m—was climbed by the north spur at PD+. Ascents were made of Scalnya Kiska (4,666m) and a fine rock pillar above ABC: Snezny Chelovek (Snowman) grade V. Finally, everyone with energy left joined Nelhams for the 4,542m peak above base camp, a stunning viewpoint in perfect weather.

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Borkoldoj and Southern Kokshaal-Too, Pik 5,471 (Mt. Letavet), first ascent; Krylia Sovetov (Wings of the Soviets), second ascent. In the summer of 2003 our group—Mikhail Daineiko, Dmitrii Konilov, Mikhail Ageev, Anna Perever-zeva, and myself as leader—visited the ranges of Borkoldoj and Western Kokshaal-Too on the border of Kyrgyzstan and China. Because of international disputes between the USSR and China for many years the region was practically closed and impossible to visit. Only beginning in the 1990s did groups of Russian, American, and European alpinists and tourists start to come to the area. We flew from Moscow to Bishkek. Then, we traveled by jeep along the mountain roads from the southern shore of Issyk-Kul' through several mountain passes to reach the river Naryn, to the border outpost Karasaj. From there we organized our cache into the valley of Uzengikush. Before us, until the Uzengikush valley, lay about 130 km of a difficult mountain road, which for several years had been left in neglect. Automobiles cover this stretch in 6-10 hours.

Visiting Borkoldoj, located to the north of Kokshaal-Too, we prepared to acclimate and to attempt to reach the highest point of the range: the unclimbed peak 5,171. Through several mountain passes (just lower than 5000m) we came out onto the largest glacier of the range Borkoldoj Dzhegolomaj and approached peak 5,171 from the southeast. Peak 5171 from the south-east abruptly ends with a rocky wall. The ascent of the mountain turned out to be more complicated than we had calculated drawing on available cartographic information, and could