

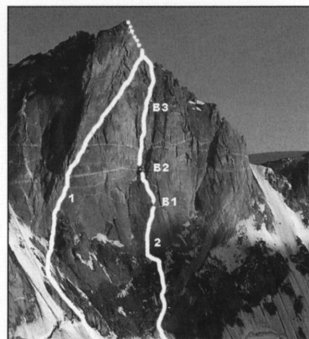
the foot of the wall, using this period to study the line, which in the lower section seemed to be threatened by stonefall. As there are only three ledges on the wall, all of them sloping and covered with rocks and ice, we took a portaledge. The rock on the route was disappointingly poor throughout, as was the weather. Homenko led the first day, climbing a series of icy corners with loose rock. Two of our 60m ropes were cut, and we lost 15m from both. Next day I led. Spindrift rendered free climbing out of the question, but I was able to place many stoppers and Camalots in shattered rock that seemed well-frozen in place. Higher we had to climb through a large roof, below which we made our third portaledge camp. On the last day Cushko took the lead. The climbing above the roof was still hard, with overhanging corners and snow-filled cracks reminding me of Trango. However, the west ridge was not far off, and once on the crest we enjoyed sunshine as we climbed to the summit. During the descent we were hit by another big storm, and it took a day and a half to reverse our route to the glacier, fortunately without real adventures. Our new direct route is 700m high (850m of climbing) with difficulties of F6a A3 55°.

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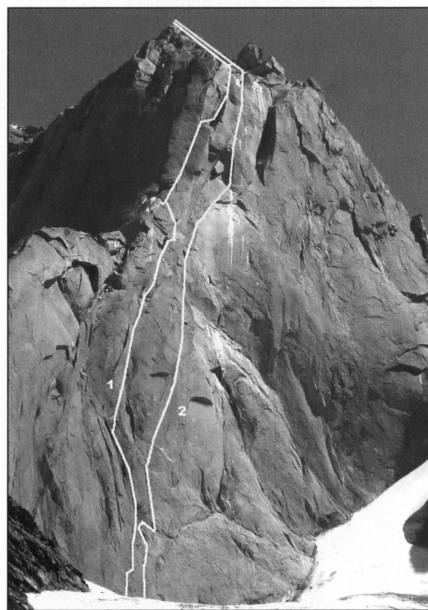
*Liaylak Valley, Pik Blok, west face.* From July 28 to August 6 Belorussian Alexander Maximenja made a solo first ascent on the west face of Pik Blok (5,239m). The new route lies parallel to and left of the Valiev Route, was graded Russian 6A, and had technical difficulties of F6a and A4. Blok, which lies on the eastern rim of the Liaylak Valley, was originally climbed in 1983 during the first Soviet Championships to be held in the area.

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*Kara-su Valley, Kirkchilta, northwest face.* Pavla Pavlikova and I climbed a new line (1,000 Years of Russian Christianity, 4,507m) on the northwest face of Kirkchilta. The walls of Kotina, Kirkchilta, and Asan lie an hour and a half above base camp in the Kara-su. Base Camp was in a wonderful spot next to a clear stream and boulders, surrounded by granite towers. However, be prepared to share this idyllic setting with cows and donkeys. Fifteen minutes from camp is a hut, where locals sell lipjoska bread and mutton. We chose a line to the right of the 2006 Polish Route, Czarna Wolga, and spent two days getting equipment to the foot of the wall. With no fixed ropes, we hauled our gear at the end of each two-pitch block, which took a lot of time and energy. In addition the weather was poor, so



The north face of Pik 4,600m in the Liaylak Valley. (1) Bashkirov Route (date unknown). (2) Odessa Route (2008). Anna Piunova Collection



The west face of Pik Blok (5,239m) in the Liaylak Valley. (1) Maximenja Route (2008). (2) Valiev Route. Anna Piunova Collection