

## Kyrgyzstan

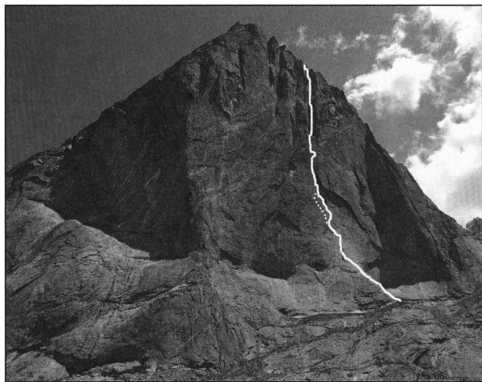
### PAMIR ALAI

#### KARAVSHIN

*Asan (4,230m), northwest face, Timofeev Route, first free ascent.* In August, as part of a Mammut Team Trip, I joined Austrian David Lama and Swiss Giovanni Quirici and Stephan Siegrist, and with photographer Rainer Eder, filmmaker Christoph Frutiger, and expedition organizer Robert Steiner (Germany) made a trip to the Karavshin.

After flying to Batkin and continuing by road, we trekked three days to reach base camp in the Kara-su, where we found other expeditions, mostly Russian and Ukrainian. We wanted to open a new free route on the 900m northwest face of Asan and spotted a potential line in the middle of the wall. However, after two pitches we retreated. As one of the Russians later explained, all possible routes on this wall have been climbed; away from existing lines the rock is shit. But the man gave us good advice on possibilities for free-climbing established routes, so we changed our objective to the Timofeev Route. [Editor's note: It was first climbed during the 1988 Soviet Championships, as primarily an aid climb, and given the hardest Russian grade of 6B. Later it became relatively popular and was downgraded to 6A. Some of the aid was eventually eliminated to give technical difficulties of F7a and A3 on sound rock.]

After two-three intro pitches, the next four pitches, on steep slabs, were hard, and had originally been climbed with Bathooks. Old Soviet 5mm bolts were in place. As there were no real cracks, we added new ones, side by side. With one exception there was no additional drilling on previously unbolted ground (bolts were added at belays and the route equipped for a rappel descent, but the standard of aid climbing will not have changed). This section proved to be the crux. Above, we continued up a fantastic series of cracks, fixing a total of 10 pitches before making our final attempt.



The northwest face of Asan showing the Timofeev route. [visualimpact.ch](http://visualimpact.ch) | Rainer Eder



At base camp the alarm sounded at 1 a.m. We made the one-and-a-half-hour approach to the foot of the route, jumared 500m, and at 6 a.m., first light, we set off on the remaining pitches. Our idea was to red-point every pitch, and this proved not to be so difficult, as the maximum grade was 7b, and the cracks and protection were super-solid. Lama, Quirici, Siegrist, and I reached the summit at 2 p.m.

We walked east to the Ak-su valley, where a large group of climbers from Geneva was based. Leading through on the Perestroika Crack, Giovanni and I on-sighted



Stefan Siegrist on pitch 4 (7b+) of the Timofeev Route. The rock wall behind and in shadow is a subsidiary buttress below Usan (4,378m). To its right, in the far distance, is Pik Piramidalny (5,509m), while below is the moraine-covered Kara-su Glacier. [visualimpact.ch](http://visualimpact.ch) | Rainer Eder

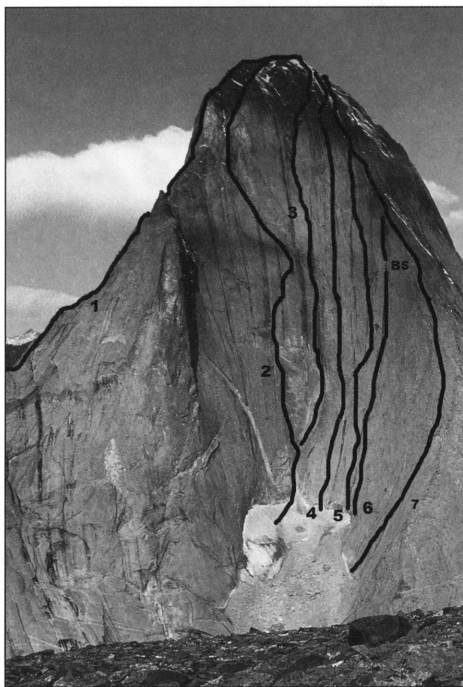
every pitch. Stephan teamed with one of the Geneva climbers, Sébastien Pochon, as David had returned home, led the entire route, and on-sighted every pitch: the first one-day on-sight. We reached the summit in about eight hours, an effort that left me destroyed. There is still much potential in this region for aspiring free climbers, due to the climber-friendly granite - a climber's Eldorado as Saladin once described it.

NINA CAPREZ, SWITZERLAND, with additional material from ROBERT STEINER, GERMANY

*Editor's note: The single crack splitting the west face of the Russian Tower is one of the world's classic big-wall free routes. Put up in 1991 by four Frenchmen at 7a and A2, with much of the climbing at around 6c, it can be climbed in anything from 18 to 24 pitches. Two years later it was climbed by Francois Pallandre, with only one pitch of aid, at 7a/7b. In 1995, in a single push of 28 hours, Greg Child and Lynn Hill freed it at 7b. The first on-sight was likely made in 2006 by Adam and Pawel Pustelnik, with Slawek Syndecki, though in a much longer time than the Swiss.*

Pik 4,810m, east face. Previously unrecorded outside Korea, but an important event in the history of climbing in the Karavshin, was a new route, climbed free, on the giant east face of Pik 4,810m (Boston) above the Ak-su Valley. On July 17, 1994, Koreans Choi Byeong-gi and Shin Dong-seok started up the face seven or so meters to the right of the Sytnik route and climbed 25 pitches to the summit, at 5.10c. The two bivouacked at three-quarters height in the "Bomb Shelter" and reached the top the following afternoon. They report seeing gear on the Sytnik route but found none on their line. They rappelled the Verdernikov route to the north, bivouacked a second time, and continued their descent to base camp. It is thought that no other free ascent has been achieved on this face. The two climbers were part of a 12-man team, members of which were unsuccessful on other climbs apart from Lee Dong-yoon and Shin Sang-man, who repeated the Troschchinenko route on the north face of Rocky Ak-su (Ak-su North, 5,217m).

PETER JENSEN-CHOI, Korea



Pik 4810 from the east. (1) Southeast Ridge (unknown). (2) Pogorelov (1999). (3) Direttissima (1995). (4) Klenov (1993). (5) Sytnik (1989). (6) Korean (1994). (7) Vedernikov (1989). John Arran