



AAC Publications

Zor Kumtor Valley: First Ascents

Kyrgyzstan, Pamir, Alai Range, Kichik-Alai

In late September and early October, our Czech-Slovak team made a trip to virgin peaks in the Alai mountains. Our plan was to climb from the Zor Kumtor Valley, which is the last valley flowing north into the long Kichik-Alai Valley before the latter rises to Kichik-Alai Pass (4,082m).

The Kichik-Alai or Little Alai mountains, which lie south of Osh, comprise two ranges that run roughly east-west on either side of the Kichik-Alai River. [The highest summit, which lies a little southeast of the Zor Kumtor in the southern range, is 5,051m Pik Skobelov. The area has much scope for new routes on 4,000m peaks, as it was largely overlooked due to the proximity of Pik Lenin and its surrounding mountains directly across the border to the south. The climbing season in this region can last as long as from May to October, and no special permit is required for access.] **Thanks to a brand-new gravel road, it was pretty easy in 2018 to reach any of the side valleys above the main Kichik-Alai Valley.**

There had been heavy snowfall in mid-September, and above 3,900m there was at least 30cm of fresh snow. We established our base camp just below the snow line. The Zor Kumtor has two peaks: The higher is more remote and more glaciated, the lower closer to camp but with a short steep glacier on the north side.

We first climbed the higher peak, which we named Pik 100 Let Czechoslovakii (100 Years of Czechoslovakia, 39°48'29.67"N, 72°32'44.71"E Google Earth, 4,862m), as Czechs and Slovaks were celebrating this anniversary in October 2018. A direct approach via the main glacier leading to its base was too complex, so we elected to climb a steep slope to the right to reach a sort of hanging plateau to the east of the lower peak. From here we continued south across a small glacier to reach the moraines of the main glacier below the higher peak. It was now an easy climb to the top; hard ice covered with a few centimeters of snow rising to 40–45°, where it was deemed necessary to use two axes (in descent we rappelled this section). Just below the top was a broad snow terrace, from which we could easily ascend the last few meters of rock. If the weather permits, from this point you can clearly see Pik Lenin and all the northern Pamir. Climbers were L. Berankova, P. Hlavica, J. Krefky, L. Kroker, P. Kubalik, J. Moravcik, J. Smrtka, M. Sranc, Z. Svoboda, and me, and the overall grade was 2A.

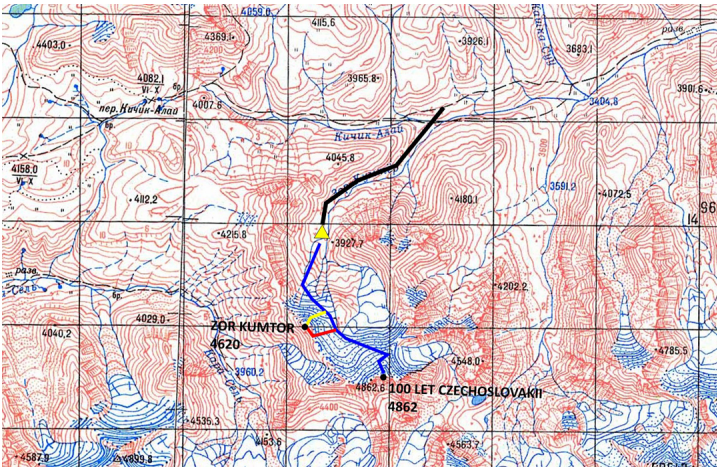
We took a rest day and then climbed the smaller peak, which we named Zor Kumtor (39°48'57.09"N, 72°31'43.15"E Google Earth, 4,620m), as it is visible on the approach up the valley. (The main peak is not visible from most parts of the valley.) Smrtka and Sranc climbed the right edge of the northeast-facing plateau (three pitches of ice up to 60°), which reached the northwest ridge a little below the summit. They named the route Pelumi (3A). Meanwhile, Berankova, Krefky, Kroker, Moravcik, Svoboda, and I climbed the east couloir, which rose to 45° below the final cornice, at 1B. Both parties arrived on the top at the same time.

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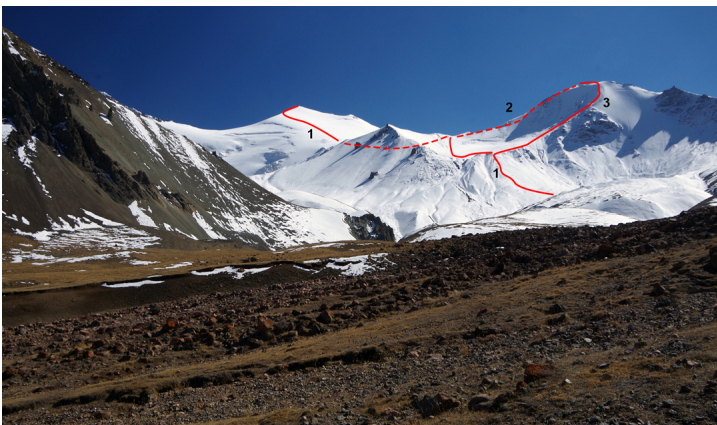
Images



The north face of Pik 110 Let Czeckoslovakii.



Russian map of Zor Kumtor showing base camp, peaks ascended, and Pik Skobelov (5,051m) in the bottom right corner.



The upper Zor Kumtor Valley with (1) the approach used to access and climb the north face of Pik 100 Let Czeckoslovakii, (2) the east couloir of Zor Kumtor, and (3) the northeast rib of Zor Kumtor.

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