



International Mountaineering camp in Georgia 2004

Kazbek, the Caucasus 3 – 10 July

Kazbek is the most favorite mountain and the first serious summit for alpinists. It is 5047m high and is quite difficult to ascend. However, experienced alpinists always took new ones on Mount Kazbek for its interesting routes. Because of that, Mount Kazbek was chosen for the camp.

Zurab Kutchava leads the group. Six other experienced alpinists are with him who are the guides the same way. There are guys from Switzerland, Austria and the Ukraine in our camp. Those from Switzerland and Austria were met in Tbilisi and we left together. The guy from the Ukraine was waiting for us in Kazbek. For the five members of the Camp including the guests this is the first ascent to such a height. Others were the members of the UIAA camp as well last year. The influence of those impressions still can be felt. All the way we are chatting with the members of the Camp; we have not seen each other for a long time.

About twenty members of UIAA camp are arriving in the town Kazbek. This is the final point, where we can get the car. We are unloading our equipment, separating the load and starting our way to the glacier.

Mount Kazbek, muffled in the mist, becomes clear and shows its white hat as if greeting us. It seems the weather is fine on the mountain. It is not cold in the town Kazbek as well and we are going to Gergeti, looking forward to the new impressions.

Gergeti is the first place, where the group stops. We are choosing the camp place near the spring above the town Kazbek and are setting up the tents. We are not very hungry; we were at the restaurant on our way to Kazbek, but anyways, with great zeal we are preparing and having our supper. It is getting dark; we are nearly on the mountainside and feel how it is getting colder. The members of the Camp are starting to make the fire. There is a lot of firewood around and the fire comes out very easily. But Zura does not give us time to sit round the fire for a long time. Tomorrow we have the long way and we need to rest.

On the next day everyone carries their own load and the common one is taken by horses to the glacier. We are going up to Sabertse and are setting our next camp right here. The glacier starts from here. It is not the long way left until the base camp – Meteostation, but the leader of the Camp shields the new ones and prefers not to make such height in a very short time. We are not in a hurry and we stay that night on Sabertse. Only the big stones are



around. The summit looks over us. The river flows below the camp. We are missing the fire from the last night, but nobody shows. The Camp lives according to the real alpinist rules. We go to sleep early. The altitude is not very high and we feel ourselves well. The guests come into to contact very easily. Everyone knows English and the conversation comes out easily. The guys share the mountaineering experience.

The third morning we are dressed warmly. We have to cross the glacier. There are many fissures of different sizes on the slope. Therefore, the leader divides us into several groups and each of it has own guide. We put on the harnesses and rope up. We start to walk slowly. It is the slope and a bit difficult for us. However, the new ones are not weak at all. The guides try to help all of us and teach how to synchronize the breath with steps. This gives the opportunity to move rhythmically, in even pace and not to get tired. We have to gain not a little height and besides we move on the glacier and have to rest several times. The most inexperienced and weak guys are in rope with Zura and move at the end.

We are at the Meteo station by noon. This evening the main is to clean the camp place. This we do all together. Then we are preparing the supper. The leader fixes the duty. A man on duty has to get up early, prepare to eat, bring and to clean the water.

On the fourth day we are resting. We need to muster our strength and to prepare for going out on the summit. We are in the camp all day long, telling a lot of things to each other, resting.

The camp is on 3700m height. Everyone feels well. No one has a headache like the first evening. The new ones and the guests eat well also but once acclimatization ending it is necessary to be acclimatized before going to the summit. On the day fifth Zura takes the



group near the Meteo station on mount Ortsvery. This is the best training for overcoming the height and being accustomed to the equipment and walking in the snow. We do not stay on Ortsvery for a long time. The mist comes over and the beautiful view, which should be seen from here, is covered with it. We are resting that evening. The next morning we are going out on the Mountain.

The sixth day is the most memorable. Zura wakes up us early and warns what to take with and what not to forget. Some of the members are preparing the food to bring with them. This going out is very unusual and practically never happens on Mount Kazbek. We shall spend one night on Plateau in snow and ice and the next day we shall go out on summit from here. Zura advises to take warm clothes. We are still separated into the same groups and leave the Meteo station. The most experienced first group starts early. They have to choose the place for the camp and dig the place for tents. The place is chosen on Plateau. Zura warns sternly to stay together. The rope is fixed to the toilet, which is not far from the camp. We sleep in the tents

roped up. It is necessary for safety in case of avalanche or some other event. In the kingdom of snow and ice, our different colored tents look like a small town. Nearby we organized the kitchen. It is so pleasant feeling as if we are travelers, who reached an unknown territory, and are the first who settled down here.

It is getting dark. The only kingdom of snow and white summits are around. In this whiteness the sundown has such colors that you can see in no other place. We do not take

into consideration the cold, drink the tea outside, and go to sleep when it is almost dark. Thanks to the foams, warm sleeping bags and warm clothes we feel no cold in the tents during the night. We are much excited. Tomorrow we are going on the summit. We are leaving for summit in the morning. The groups are the same – more experienced goes first, more weak are still with the leader, with Zura. The weather is fine. It is very seldom for Mount Kazbek. Generally, Kazbek is a very specific mountain. The alpinists are joking – if the Mount does not want, never lets you to go to him. UIAA camp was very successful. Most of the Camp made the summit last year. It is not easy to walk in such a big snow. Many closed fissures are around. The group needs experienced alpinists, who know the very territory well. The Camp leader and the guides are of that kind. At the last wall of the summit the weather is getting worse, thus, the ropes are handled on the summit and everyone has time for ascent. In the mist and wind, it is not very easy, although the leader helps the last members of the Camp and we can say that the UIAA camp was still successful. We ascended Mount Kazbek twice. The guests are happy. This was their first big summit.

We are descending. We are reaching our town very soon, packing, and going back to the Meteo station. Some members of the Camp are staying on Plateau and are spending the night there. It is very important, as they are leaving for Tian-Shan. This will help them in acclimatization.

We are coming down from the Meteo station on the day eight. If we needed three days for coming up, thanks to our accepted experience and the descent now in few hours we are in the town Kazbek. The transport is waiting for us. We are back to Tbilisi the same day. Still restaurant and homes are waiting for us. The guests are staying one more day in Tbilisi. They will look round the city and leave for their countries with unforgettable impressions.

The UIAA camp is ended. We are happy. For the second time about twenty people get alpinist experience, unforgettable memories, many friends and a huge love of mountains. We say good-by to each other in hope, that the Camp will be held the next year also.

