South America 1987

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Through most of 1987 Andean mountaineering was marred by storms. After the end of the world drought in late 1983 a new weather pattern seems to have established itself, at least as far as the Andes are concerned. Winter and wet seasons in the last few years have been registering below-normal amounts of precipitation, but by late winter usually a greater amount occurs, lasting well into the summer or dry season in every one of the seven Andean countries. While this does not represent a serious obstacle to mountaineering, it has been somewhat different in the central districts of Chile and Argentina, where a major part of all mountaineering and skiing activities in the Andes takes place. Bad weather in the spring and early summer (November–December) means swollen and at times impassable rivers, as well as deep snow and avalanches. This in turn forces activities to be postponed until the peak of the summer (February). Nevertheless, every kind of mountain activity in the Andes is on the rise. Noteworthy is the beginning of winter mountaineering, particularly in the central areas of the two countries mentioned.

In the following notes, all activity belongs to 1987 unless otherwise stated.

Ecuador

A Venezuelan group, including a woman, Dora Ocanto, travelled to the impressive Altar chain in Eastern Ecuador. Its main objective, Monja Grande ('bigger nun') (5160m), was climbed by its exceedingly steep 'canal de hielo' (ice-gully) on its S face by J Betancourt and N Rojas (27 December 1986). The same Rojas plus C Pernalete opened a variant on the SW ridge of Obispo (5319m), highest of Altar, while Dora Ocanto and Betancourt climbed the so-called Calvario variant to the normal route on the same peak.

Peru

The Cordillera Blanca continues to be the first choice of foreign expeditions for the fashionable opening of new routes. The following deserve at least a brief mention:

Vallunaraju Sur (5630m), SE face (M Schenone, G Ghigo, E Tessera, Italians).
Torre de Parón (c5200m), S face (M Oliva, C Polanco, E de la Cal, A Madrid, Spaniards).
Huandoy Norte (6395m), dihedral left of rock wall, N face (M Freser, M Romih, Yugoslavs).
Santa Cruz (6241m), S face, with two rock bands and hard, steep ice up to 80°

(A Luznik, E Tratnik, P Poljanec, Z Tressnovec, Yugoslavs).
Palcaraju (6274m), traverse from Palcaraju Sur (E Tratnik, Yugoslav).
Palcaraju (6274m), W ridge (P Poljanec, Z Tressnovec, Yugoslavs).

An important repeat in the same district was that of the French Bernard route on Huascarán Norte (6654m), by three Basques.

Walter Silverio, head of the Asociación de Guías (guides) de Montaña del Perú, writing to H Adams Carter, editor of the *AAJ*, remarked that some expeditions have been climbing very elevated peaks in the Cordillera Blanca with incredible speed. Thus, peaks over 6000m were in the last season ascended in a matter of hours from Base Camp, a high camp being dispensed with.

Bolivia

Two expeditions to Bolivia deserve attention. One, to the Cordillera Real, by Yugoslavs, accomplished two difficult new routes: S face of Mururata (5868m), and SE and SW faces of Nevado de Cotaña ('Pico Schulze') (5830m), simultaneously, all by members of the Railway Alpine Club, Ljubljana.

The second Bolivian expedition was a massive enterprise, perhaps a trekking, by Germans from Bayreuth, accompanied by Bolivian climbers. They visited the northern extreme of the Cordillera Quimsa Cruz, which begins immediately south of Illimani, and conducted there the massive ascent of rock peaks and peaklets belonging to the Mocoya, Tarujumaña and Teacota valleys. In all they climbed 27 summits (4700 to 5304m), nearly all first ascents. Part of the group then moved to the SE corner of the range (San Lorenzo group) and reclimbed some of the fine *nevados* previously ascended by Japanese and Bolivians. First ascents of four other peaks in the San Pedro group were also made. This was the only expedition to accomplish pioneer work in the Andes in 1987.

Chile and Argentina

Central Andes. On the Chilean side, among very many ascents that take place every season (December to March), the first winter ascent of the well-known peak of San José (5880m) should be mentioned. Four women and 17 men led by Iván Vigoroux participated (15 September). In 1987 Chile had one of its most severe winters on record.

On the Argentinian side, in order to investigate the existence of traces of pre-Columbian ascents, university students ascended the central peaks of the Cordillera del Tigre, which overlooks the *pampas* or plains. Results were poor, but, among other ascents, the first of Cerro Barauca (c5400m) was carried out by two members on 9 February.

Aconcagua, as happens yearly now, drew mountaineers who aimed at opening new variants on its famous S face. Yugoslavs Milan Romih and Danilo Tic examined several possible lines; bad weather and avalanches forced them to try the right side of the French route. It took them seven days to finish it, enduring avalanches and cold bivouacs on the way. They descended by the normal route.

A Chilean party tried a combination of routes. C Buracchio, J Monte and C Thiele started climbing the 1982 Yugoslav variant in its lower third, combined then with the French route and finished in the upper third of the face by following the Messner variant. The Chileans had trained at home by performing winter ascents.

Andes Australes. This is the name that Chileans and Argentinians commonly use to designate collectively the mountain regions of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego. Early in February, Argentinians climbed Aguja (needle) Guillaumet by the Fonrouge route and the ice-peak of Gorra Blanca (2920m). But the main achievements belong to Italians. In the Paine district they reported the following activity:

Torre Sur del Paine, E face: E Orlandi, M Giarolli, E Salvaterra (20 November 1986).

Torre Norte del Paine, S spur, and Torre Sur del Paine, N spur: the last two climbs, by L Leonardi and M Manica, were the first winter ascents in the district, since they occurred in June, the first Chilean winter month. The Italians reported much wind, −25° and not much snowfall.

Torre Central del Paine, NW face: five Italians under M Ballerini (24 December 1986).

Perhaps the main event in the Andes in the mountaineering year 1987 was the first ascent of the W peak of Cerro Sarmiento (c2200m). Sarmiento, like Alpamayo, Siniolchu and Nilkanta, has been referred to as 'the most beautiful mountain in the world'. It has two great ice-cathedrals: the E or main peak (2234m), climbed by Italians in 1958, and the W peak, which had been attempted by climbers of the same nationality at least three times. Now, on 8 December 1986, four Italian climbers methodically braved the force of the wind, the cold, deep snow and overhanging ice mushrooms and reached the summit of this very fine peak. With this triumph, Italian mountaineering reaffirms its leading role in exploration and climbing in the Andes Australes.

Aconcagua Map

Jerzy Wala, Carles Capellas and Josep Paytubi: Aconcagua. Scale 1:50,000. Monochrome orographical map 40 × 50cm. The American Alpine Club, New York, 1987.

Józef Nyka writes:
The map is a beautiful example of international collaboration. Elaborated and drawn by Wala, it was prepared for printing in Sabadell by the Spanish experts from the *Servei General d'Informació de Muntanya* – Carles Capellas and Josep Paytubi, who also wrote useful appendices. The material has been supervised and revised by the South American authority, Evelio Echevarría. The production and publication was taken over by the American Alpine Club.

The map shows the Aconcagua massif (6959m) with the surrounding mountains from Cerro La Mano (5426m) in the north to Cerro Tolosa (5432m)

in the south. The terrain features, though only in skeletal drawing, are detailed and extremely clear. The map is a continuation of the *Cuadernos de Alpinismo* (Mountaineering Notebooks), edited since 1982 by the *Servei General d'Informació de Muntanya*, where it is available: SGIM, Apartat Correus 330, 08200 Sabadell, Barcelona, Spain.