South America 1988

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As if confirming the opinion about the future of mountaineering that David Lord advanced in the 1981 issue of this journal, the high mountain sports in the Andes are showing indeed a much less crowded scene overall, a greater concentration of climbing crowds at particular sites and a decline of public interest in climbing. Generally speaking, the Andean valleys seem to be now less visited, partly because the Himalaya-Karakoram represents a greater attraction and partly, also, because crowds tend to accumulate (or are accumulated by caravan managers) in a reduced number of more accessible valleys. Chosen areas are now, more than ever, the northern half of the Cordillera Blanca of Peru, Aconcagua and, for a short spell of three weeks, the Chaltén group in Patagonia. In addition, as far as foreign expeditions are concerned, there is also the slowly but steadily increasing fear of attack by guerrillas, terrorists and even farmers and miners.

On the other hand, at least in a few areas, Andean mountaineering has been displaying some unforeseen characteristics. Aconcagua and the great peaks of the central Peruvian cordilleras have been chosen as favourite places for the execution of stunts of all kinds known to Western civilization. *Ski-extreme* is another, with incredibly steep S faces of Peruvian peaks boldly descended by Italians and French. Finally, it could also be added that winter mountaineering by the South Americans themselves has been slowly developing, particularly in the central districts of Chile and Argentina.

The following are only the more noteworthy activities registered for 1988.

Colombia

A Colombian-Polish group successfully climbed the N face of Alto Ritacuba (5464m), highest point in the Cordillera Oriental, but the exploit ended in tragedy. A collapsing serac from the summit dragged the Pole M Danielek and the Colombian Jairo Guerrero to their deaths. The only survivor was the Pole R Gajewski (18 April).

Peru and Bolivia

The main ascents in the Peruvian season (June–August) belong to the Cordillera Blanca. The grandiose peak of Nevado Santa Cruz (6241m), believed by many to be finer than Alpamayo itself, was climbed by a variant of the W face by R Gocking and A Berliner (13 August). Norwegians J Maardalen and H Martens achieved the near first ascent of Nevado 5697m in the Huantsán group (July), although the pair did not win the last 20m of the summit ridge. A French military group led by A Estève realized several ascents, including the Barrard

route of Huascarán Norte (6654m) and a new variant on the SW face of Taulliraju (5830m), 'a couloir on the great buttress on the right of the face'. The leader, by the way, descended on to the summit of Huascarán Sur (6769m) by parachute, jumping at 7200m from a Cessna, and continued his descent to the lower valleys by paraglider.

(*H Adams Carter adds*: In Peru's Cordillera Blanca, Charlie Fowler soloed on 4 June a new route to the right of the Italian ridge on the W face of Taulliraju on icy slabs up to 80°. Among other climbs with Bill Mooz and John Arnow, he made a two-day new route on Chacraraju Sur's S face between the American and Italian lines. Arnow and Fowler did a new route on the W face of Cayesh in two days. It was in the middle of the face, mostly on rock with only two pitches of ice on the main face, but the final knife-edged snow ridge was scary.)

In the Cordillera Huayhuash, the Italian skiers T Valeruz and T Weiss introduced a new variant to the left of the Ferrari route on the W face of Nevado Sarapo (6143m). Valeruz then descended the face by ski.

In the Cordillera Vilcabamba the magnificent mountain Salcantay (6271m) was climbed by a complicated and somewhat zigzagging route on the N face by the well-known Peruvian guide Alberto Callupe and his German client Hans Zebrowski (21 June). Ausangate (6372m), highest in the Cordillera Vilcanota, was scaled by the E face and SE ridge by Poles M Karon and A Makaran (27 June).

The only exploratory journey known for the 1988 Peruvian season was a minor venture by a solo mountaineer. Evelio Echevarría entered the Cordillera de la Viuda, in the Lima hinterland, and, besides some pleasant repeats, realized the first ascent of three peaks 5150m high, situated S and SW of Rajuntay, highest in the range. An attempt on Nevado Uco (5100m) failed because of the bad quality of the rock, an unpleasant characteristic of this very accessible Peruvian cordillera (June).

The only noteworthy enterprise for the Bolivian season fell to the five-man scientific-sportive expedition of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club that operated in August on the western side of the Cordillera de Apolobamba. Members D Hick and M Smith (leader) opened a new route, the N ridge of Nevado Cololo (5916m), and ascended Nevado Nubi (5710m) by the 1957 German route.

Chile and Argentina

No new activities have been reported for the Chilean side of the Andean frontier, although a number of important repeats take place there every season (December to March). It should be mentioned that the ice cascade of the S face of Cerro Negro (4975m), an imposing rock peak NE of Santiago, was at last climbed. On 28 January 1987 C Buracchio and C Thiele overcame the 250m high cascade whose steepness varies from 60 to 90°, a locally much coveted goal.

On their side of the border, the Argentinians registered the following important ascents:

Northern Andes or Puna: Cerro Pilar de las Pailas (5900m by altimeter), first ascent on 15 April, by eight climbers from Salta led by C Vitry.
Cerro Bonete Chico, 6395m, third ascent of this very remote mountain (end of March 1987), by G Planes and E Steenhus.
Central Andes: Aconcagua, 6960m. First ascent of W face, keeping close to the SE ridge, by Argentinians D Alessio and D Rodríguez (11 January); they placed three high camps, found rock-walls some 50m high alternating with ice and rock gullies, ice cascades and tongues of very hard snow. Attempt by a new variant of French route, keeping to the right of it; with some 1700m already climbed, the route had to be abandoned because of danger and bad weather (31 January–2 February); the participants were Yugoslavs M Romih and S Sveticic.
Andes Australes (southernmost Andes of Chile and Argentina): in late 1987 seven Italians trekked to Patagonia where some members climbed Cerro Torre and opened new routes on the left of the E buttress of El Mocho, on the SSE spur of El Ñato and on the W face and W spur of Aguja Saint-Exúpery. In the San Lorenzo massif, members also accomplished the first ascent of Cerro Dos Picos (2275m).
In the *Paine district* the following meritorious enterprises were also reported by Italians. Torre Sur: F Leoni, G Bagatoli, J Espen and Michele Cagol (11 November). Torre Norte: F Leoni, C Fruet and Paola Fanton-Leoni, Monzino route (November). The same climb was repeated afterwards by other Italians and, later, by Swiss. Torre Central: E Salvaterra, Ginella Paganini (5 November). The names listed indicate the remarkable participation of women in difficult climbs.

(*H Adams Carter adds*: In Patagonia, Jim Bidwell did two new routes, one on Cerro Stanhardt and the other on Desmachado. Alan Kearney also did some excellent routes, but details are missing.)

In Memoriam

Ecuadorian Ramiro Navarrete fell to his death when descending from Annapurna in the Nepal Himalaya. He had travelled widely, having climbed in the Pamir (Pik Kommunizma, by a difficult route), Xixabangma, invited by Jerzy Kukuczka, and he had a large number of important Andean ascents to his credit, in Peru, Bolivia, Colombia, and, of course, in his native Ecuador, where with a companion he made the entire traverse of Chimborazo. He was also an author and editor of Quito's *Campo Abierto*. He will be remembered as one of the most accomplished South American climbers.