South America 1991

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During the calendar year 1991 Andean mountaineering saw some changes. The number of expeditions, both foreign and local, seem to have suffered a slight reduction, but repeat ascents, on the other hand, were on the increase; the commercialisation of mountain tourism took an unprecedented change for the worse; and the weather patterns of the last four or five years were altered.

Repeat ascents continued to dominate the Andean scene. In some well visited areas there was a new characteristic: a greater emphasis on speed. Peaks over 6000m were often ascended from Base, simply dispensing with an intermediate camp. Repeat ascents, as usual, tended to concentrate on the same popular areas, namely the high volcanoes of Ecuador, the Cordillera Blanca of Peru, the Cordillera Real of Bolivia, as well as the Aconcagua, Chaltén-Torre and Paine districts in the southern Andes. In the last two areas routes that were hitherto considered remarkably difficult were repeated a number of times. No doubt the good weather caused by the drought of the late 1980s was a great aid.

But dry weather came to a sudden stop, at least in central Bolivia as well as along the entire length of the Andes of Chile; the latter country received exceptionally heavy snowstorms during the second half of the calendar year. To Chilean climbers this meant both dangerously swollen torrents and complicated rescue operations.

The political picture has remained fairly much the same as in previous years, although in Peru there has been a slow change for the better. Its Cordillera Huayhuash has remained almost wholly unvisited by climbers for several years and some areas in the Cuzco region are still unsafe. Both Peru and Colombia still have troubled areas while Venezuela and Ecuador, on the other hand, have become favourites among mountain trekkers.

The economic scene also saw changes. Commercialisation of tourism has been taking an unpleasant turn. Inflated costs and charges are now beginning to dominate some services mountaineers need most, particularly hired motor transportation. An unwelcome decision was made by the government of the province of Mendoza, Argentina, to impose an entry fee of US$80 on every visitor to the Aconcagua Mountain Park. No doubt this measure, if successful, will be imitated by other park authorities everywhere in South America.

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Peru

In spite of unpleasant political reports, Europeans and South Americans continue to visit the **Cordillera Blanca.**

Pukarashta Central (*c*5650m) Phil Moorey, Mick Davie and Steve Di Ponio reached the summit via the S face on 16 June (TD-).

Pukarashta Oeste (*c*5450m) On 19 June Neil Kemp, Dave Sharman and Simon Lee (UK) climbed the SW face (550m D+). Earlier, on 15 June, Kemp, Sharman and Australian Duncan Thomas climbed a gully between this mountain and Pukarashta Central to join the 1980 W ridge route (450m D-).

Pukarashta Este (*c*5700m) Davie and Moorey climbed the difficult S face of this peak, but Moorey fell in an abseiling accident while descending, leaving Davie to solo down the route alone to get help. Moorey unfortunately died while being evacuated (550m ED).

Pukahirka Sur (6039m) Sharman and Thomas climbed the obvious couloir on the S face (800m TD).

Jatunmontepunka – Pukaranra Gerhard Feichtenschlager (Austria) soloed some routes on two small summits between these peaks. The best was directly up the seracs on the SW face of **Pt 5340m** (250m D).

Huascaran Sur Slovenian Pavle Kozjek soloed a line on the S face, linking icefields left of B Grison's route of 1985 and joining it at *c*6200m (TD+). This was probably the most important route of the year.

Bolivia

Political unrest diverted Peru travellers to Bolivia. In the magnificent, but frigid, **Cordillera Real** the main mountaineering event was Yugoslav:

Illampu – N summit (6342m) Miha Vreča and Marko Vrevc climbed a very exposed route on the W face. Three days later their countrymen, Matjaz Jamnik and Miha Kajzelj, climbed a new route on the W face of the main summit (6368m).

Pt 5983m In the confusing array of peaks clustering around Illampu a group of Spaniards climbed this peak which may have been ascended before.

Huayna Potosí (6088m) In 1990, four Spaniards, including a woman (Elisa González) climbed a new route on the E face of this attractive ice pyramid.

South of Illimani, the **Cordillera de Quimsa Cruz** attracted a little more attention than in the last two years:

Taruj Umana (4750m) The Swiss team of Hans-Peter Bircher, Gian-Andri Tanno and Christian Plüss climbed a new route on the E face of this peak and the first ascent of a 4900m peak.

During 1990, in the northern area of the Cordillera Quimsa Cruz, Britons Angus Andrew and Neil Howells made the first ascent of **Cerro Chamac Collo** (*c*5350m) via the NE face. In 1991 Evelio Echevarría climbed the W gully.

Nevado San Luis (5620m) and **Nevado San Juan or Altarani** (5540m) Second ascents of these mountains, both by new routes from the north, were made by Evelio Echevarría, who also made the first ascent of **Cerro Santa Rosa** (5520m), May–July 1991.

Chile and Argentina

Again, repeat ascents have become a normal occurrence, particularly in the central and southern Andes of the long but narrow Chilean Andean territory. The glaciated high volcanoes in the northern extremity of the country and on the Bolivian border are now a particular attraction, owing to improved roads and access facilities of the Lauca National Park.

Graham Little and Adrian Baker made a winter ascent of **Licancabur (5916m)**, via the E spur, on 5 August. They went on to climb **Volcan Simbad (5924m)**, **Cerro de Pili (6046m)**, **Volcan Lascar (5641m)** and **Ojos del Salado (6885m)**. (See article 'Atacama Initiation' in this volume.)

A Santiago based expedition operated in the area north of the Paine Towers. Their ascents included the third of **Trono Blanco** (*c*2400m) and, maybe, the second of **Gemelo Oeste** (*c*2400m). On **Fortaleza (2775m)** two members climbed a new line between the normal and SE routes. Others made the second alpine-style ascent of the 1968 Clough route on the same mountain.

Nevado de Pissis Massif An Italian expedition made a number of ascents here, including the first ascent of the S side of Pissis and the first ascent of Pt 5600m.

Central Tower of Paine – E face Noel Craine, Paul Pritchard, Sean Smith and Simon Yates made the first ascent of *El Regalo de Mowana*, a 1200m 34 pitch route, in December 1991-January 1992.

Todd Swain adds:

In the Fitzroy group the weather was rather unstable, but a number of new routes and important repeats were climbed by two Austrian climbers – Toni Ponholzer and Tommi Bonipace. These were **Cerro Stanhardt** (first winter and third overall ascent of the *Bridwell route*), the SE face of **Bifida** (8 pitches VII+, third ascent of the peak), the first ascent of **Perfil de Indio** (5 pitches III) and a new route to each summit of **Quatro de Dedos**. Later they attempted to make the second ascent of the *Egger route* on **Cerro Torre**, but failed at a high point above the Cerro Torre/Torre Egger col after some serious and difficult climbing. Both the climbers hail from Toni Egger's home town.

Cerro Torre Andy DeKlerk and Julie Brugger were the first to succeed on the mountain (28 January), climbing the *Compressor route*. They also repeated the *Piola routes* on the **Inominata** and the **Mocho** saying both were very fine.

Józef Nyka adds:

Aconcagua – La Directa Spaniards Luis Miguel Lopez and Angel Martin Martinez climbed this new route on the W face. Their route leaves the *Ruta Normal* at the Plaza Canada, heading in a direct line towards the summit. It rejoins the normal route not far from the summit, at *c*6800m. The route is not hard (III and 50°) and is recommended for winter when the slopes are covered with snow.