

South America 1985

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Mountaineering activity in the entire Andes during 1985 continued on a smaller scale in comparison to the activity registered early this decade. Reasons for this reduction remain the same: the vogue acquired by the Himalaya and the changing weather patterns. Bad weather has now become a characteristic of the Andes. After a cycle of nine years of drought (late 1974 to mid 1983) which drastically changed Andean glaciers almost everywhere, unstable weather and unfavourable snow conditions seem to be now the rule. Curiously, rains and snowfall have been normal or below normal in the precipitation season, but abundant in the dry or climbing season of every area, which resulted in many unexpected failures. However, while it is true that Andean mountaineering is on the decrease, it has remained sufficiently active to be declared the most active high mountain activity in the world after Russia's. In Asia, much higher peaks are climbed every year, but this refers only to sporadic ascents. In the world of today, only the Russians can claim to routinely ascend peaks as high as those ascended every season in South America by both local and foreign parties.

Northern Andes

Foreign trekking parties have begun to scout the Andes north of the Equator so as to move away from the politically troubled areas to the south. The main ascents in the N Andes, however, have been accomplished by local climbers. In Venezuela, women have been particularly active. The first all-woman ascent of Pico Bolívar was an event of note, the more so considering the bad weather predominating in the Sierra Nevada de Mérida during early 1985. A party of five, led by Rosa Pabón, made the ascent of Pico Bolívar, highest in Venezuela (5002m), on 27 April, by the Bourgoin couloir. Another woman, Dora Ocanto, with José Betancourt, introduced a variant on the S face of Pico Abanico (4900m) on 20 May.

In Ecuador, the two main ascents by local climbers took place in 1984. On 1 January, O Morales, with the Frenchman G de Lataillade, climbed the 800m N face of El Obispo (5319m), highest peak in the Altar massif, a new route. In the last week of 1984, F Almeida, P Garcés, L Naranjo and M Reinoso, all with much experience in climbing in the same massif, opened a new route on Canónigo (5260m), which they climbed by its S face, with one bivouac. Finally, on 30–31 December 1984, L Griffin and M Woolridge of the Alpine Climbing Group, made a new route on the SSW face of Chimborazo (6267m), with a bivouac below the summit plateau.

Peru and Bolivia

The main events in Peruvian climbing belong to the Cordillera Blanca. The SW face of Nevado Alpamayo (5947m) attracted in 1984 several expeditions. It was

ascended by a Frenchman, D Pivot (28 June), by Argentinians from San Juan led by G Raynié (12 July) and by Ecuadorians, who opened a variant of the Ferrari route. Also in 1984, Ramiro Navarrete and Marco Suárez, Ecuadorians, climbed the S wall of the imposing Nevado Santa Cruz (6241m), until they reached at about 6000m the SW ridge, which took them to the summit (4 August); they rappelled down the Jaeger route of 1978. Navarrete, a leading South American climber, returned to the Cordillera Blanca in 1985. An accident had deprived him of a companion and had to climb alone. He made, in three days from Huaraz and back, an ascent of the W buttress of Huascarán (6768m), declaring that this route is more difficult than the classic one, but also safer. Afterwards, he attempted the S ice wall of Chacraraju (6112m), but had to retreat due to the unsafe conditions of the ice. Still, he was able to climb the S face of Artesonraju (6025m), again in three days from Huaraz and back (18 July).

Elsewhere in Peru, a Polish expedition (K Ambrozy, E Chrobak, W Derda, M Kwasny) scaled the NW face of the fine Vilcanota peak of Colpa Anante (or Cayangate IV, 6110m). The Poles also attempted the N buttress of Ausangate (6372m), but bad weather forced them to abandon the attempt.

Political unrest kept expeditions away from several areas in Peru and Bolivia. In the latter country bad weather hit Andean areas throughout the climbing season (late April to September). Most of the repeat ascents registered during 1985 had to be done in deep snow.

For the first time since 1903, a mountain ascent in the Cordillera de Potosí has been reported. The first, and indeed the only mountaineer to climb in this unglaciated, rocky range located east of the famous colonial city was the German Alpine poet Henry Hoek (*A7* 23, pp19–30). In May 1985 E Echevarría twice entered the range alone and made the first ascent of two rock peaks over 4900m and the second of three others over 5000m, all in the northern half of the range. Hoek had crossed over the Abra (pass) Illimani here in November 1903. In this new expedition it was discovered that members of the Instituto Geográfico Militar de Bolivia had surveyed the range in March 1956 and ascended several peaks, whose cairns and benchmarks were found on the summits.

Chile and Argentina

Northern Andes. Archaeology, not mountaineering, motivated the several expeditions that climbed in the *Puna*, or northern highland, of both countries, during 1985. After realizing several repeats over 6000m on the Chilean side, Johan Reinhard (American) and Louis Glauser (Swiss) drove into Argentina to meet two other Swiss. The first two climbers made the probable second ascent of Nevado de Pissis (6780m) (25 January), third highest elevation in the American continent. The group of four also ascended other peaks to inspect Inca ruins, but made no discovery of importance. A first ascent was that of Cerro Pabellón de la Laguna Verde (5815m), on 17 March.

The Argentinian Antonio Beorchia led, as every year, a group to locate Inca ruins and ascended Cerro Amarillo de Zenta, only 3660m high, but located at the E end of the Andes of the province of Jujuy and facing the semi tropical

forests. Large ruins, with well built staircases, were inspected on this occasion (30 July).

Central Andes. Operating on their side of the frontier peaks, Chilean and German climbers made new routes on the S faces of Cerro Sierra Bella (5230m) and Cerro de Orientación I (5005m) and on the N face of Marmolejo (6100m), all in January and February 1985. The Argentinians, on their side, climbed on 9 February the SE gully of Tupungato (6550m), a triumph that was paid with the lives of the experienced L Rabal and G Vieiro. The Swiss U Buehler climbing alone in the first days of the year, climbed the Yugoslav route on the S face of Aconcagua, an exploit he carried out in only three days.

Both Aconcagua and Tupungato mountains are now both Argentinian national parks. The legislature of the province of Mendoza created the Parque Provincial Aconcagua in April 1983 and the Parque Provincial Tupungato in September 1985. Bad weather has slowed down most operations to build facilities for tourists and mountaineers. A small helicopter rescue station, a library and a museum are contemplated.

Patagonia. One of the great problems of technical climbing in Patagonia, the NE wall of Cerro Murallón (2831m), was solved by three members of the Italian group appropriately named *i Ragni* (the spiders). The final climb was executed by the expert Casimiro Ferrari, a constant traveller to the Andes, with Carlo Alde and Paolo Vitali (14 February 1984). Four attempts, between 1979 and 1984, were necessary for this triumph.

Nearly unvisited last summer (January 1985), the Patagonian Andes had an unusual visitor in the Italian Giuliano Giongo who, in August (the Chilean winter), traversed N to S, the five plateaus of the ice cap. Complete details are lacking, but it is known that he began the traverse at the Pascua fjord and, with very light loads and marching even under bad weather, he took only 34 days to reach a fjord around 50°S. He had covered, according to his own estimates, some 550km and constantly at a height of 2000m.

