

---

---

# AREA NOTES

---

---

COMPILED BY A V SAUNDERS

## South America 1989

EVELIO ECHEVARRÍA

A distressingly long period of dry weather established itself over most of the world's equatorial regions and areas adjacent to them, reaching as far as 30° latitude north and south. This 1989 drought was ascribed to what the Americans have termed the 'green-house effect', the warming in weather patterns due to the accumulation of automobile and industrial fumes. Several Andean countries were hit hard. Entire valleys were left without water, since their streams simply dried up. Small glaciers and minor névé-fields that still characterized some peaks and high valleys disappeared altogether. Cerro Tolosa (5370m), that landmark of the Mendoza valley in central Argentina, so well known to climbers, seems to have shed about one-half of the glacier that covered the western side. It is not known exactly what impact this long drought has had, or will have, over glaciers and snowfields around the world. The 1989 skiing season (June–September) did not begin in Chile until mid-August and in Argentina until the end of that month.

Otherwise, the general picture of Andean mountaineering has remained much the same as described in Area Notes in the last few years. One great addition has been female mountaineering, which from the viewpoint of high mountain climbing is receiving an increase comparable only with what is practised in some Eastern European countries. Chilean and Argentinian women have been leaders, but representative women from all the other five Andean countries have been constantly participating in prolonged expeditions, as well as in advanced technical climbing. On the political side, peasant and guerrilla attacks have remained at fairly much the same level as in the last few years, although such activity moves from one area to another. The Arequipa region in southern Peru, particularly the long and wide Colca valley, has now been declared unsafe, while the Ayacucho district is now 'safe'. Similarly, Bolivia, a country hitherto wholly safe, is now being infiltrated by Peruvian fighters who are also training their Bolivian counterparts. The area around and south of Illimani was in 1989 less safe than in the last few years. To face this problem, the author recommends the only two solutions that are viable at present: foreigners

are advised to travel in rather large groups and to hire a local climber or guide, not a simple camp guard. Local guides are usually experts in local conditions, will do their best to obtain reduced costs and estimates and will solve the language problem. Furthermore, they are generally expert climbers, some having earned their diplomas as guides in the Alps or in Spain.

The activities listed below belong to the calendar year 1989, unless otherwise stated. The bulk of this information came from the Editor of the *American Alpine Journal*, Prof H Adams Carter, from friends in Argentina (Marcelo Scanu, Claudio Bravo, Luis A Parra), Ecuador (Freddy Landázuri), and at times some reports were collected by the author himself when travelling in South America.

### Ecuador

Two new routes on well-known mountains were reported by Freddy Landázuri, editor of Quito's *Campo Abierto*. On Cotopaxi (5897m) climbers have always taken a detour from north to west to avoid the 'Yanasacha', a wall of volcanic rock that bars the way on the normal route. On 1 August, Ecuadorians Eduardo Agama, Danilo Mayorga, Jorge Peñafiel and Emilio Salgado went up the north route, climbing over the Yanasacha along the way. Because of the instability of the rock, this north side direct route was not recommended. Tungurahua (5005m) had its SW flank and S ridge climbed for the first time by Paolo Catalán and Alfredo Mensi (26 February). This mountain is usually ascended by the N side, where the Refugio Nicolás Martínez is situated.

### Peru

In spite of many reports declaring the Cordillera Blanca district a target for violence on the part of peasants and guerrillas, the magnificent peaks of at least the northern half of the range continued to receive enthusiastic visitors. New routes, if not new peaks, were the main events. Two Peruvian climbers, members of the young Club de Montañeros Américo Tordoya, were apparently the first to scale the very steep SW face of Tocllaraju (6032m), the beautiful ice peak that is one of the main goals for visitors to the Ishinca valley. The route was climbed by Mario Masuelos and Gonzalo Menacho on 21 July. Other new routes opened in the Cordillera Blanca included one on the SW face of Huantsán (or Huanchán), 6395m, by four Frenchmen who, however, could not finish the last 50m on account of the unstable ice (23 July); another was done by four Spaniards, among many existing variants on the dreaded S face of Ochsapalca (5881m), east of the Grassi route; and still another new route was by three Italians on the SE face of Vallunaraju Sur (5640m).

A Scottish party that had set its aims in the Cordillera Huayhuash travelled to the Cordillera Vilcanota in southern Peru instead, so as to avoid attacks by political groups. It claimed the first ascent of three peaks over 5200m situated west of Ausancati, but these may already have been ascended by Basques in 1977. Another group of five from Sheffield, led by Simon Cooke, achieved the first ascent of Colquecruz V (which this expedition reported as

5965m high); it was climbed at the second attempt, by its N face (29 July). The same party made a new route on Colquecruz VI (5970m) by its NW face (25 July). (*Editor's Note.* Simon Cooke was climbing with his right wrist in plaster, having broken the wrist while soloing in the UK two weeks before departure for Peru. He reports that the wrist 'didn't prove to be too much of a hindrance, but did require some modifications, with a hacksaw to fit through my duvet jacket arm and into a Dachstein glove'.)

### Bolivia

Since the Cordillera Apolobamba appears isolated enough from the main-streams of human activity, rightly or wrongly it has been declared by mountaineers themselves to be safe for visitors. The 1988 Smith expedition of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club was no doubt the cause of two parties from Great Britain coming to the same area in 1989. A three-man group from Bath University climbed the N ridge of Nevado Cololo (5915m). In the Area Notes of last year this route was mistakenly reported as having been ascended by the Smith party, which had in fact used the W ridge. Other ascents by the Bath group were Nevado Nubi (5710m) and Palomani Grande (5768m), the latter almost certainly by a new route, the SW ridge. The second expedition was launched by the Loughborough Students' Mountaineering Club and did the following ascents: Iscacuchu (5650m), second ascent; Huerancollac (5836m), traversed; Cololo (5915m), W ridge; Mita (5500m) and unnamed peaks 5375, 5370 and 5305m.

In the Cordillera Real, Bolivia's greatest range, a North American expedition from Seattle, led by John Hessburg, placed its Base Camp in the neighbourhood of the great peaks of Chearoco and Chachacomani and climbed the latter (6094m) by a new route. The Seattle group tackled 'the crazily cracked north-eastern icefall, about two miles of weaving crevasse work, then traversed up the east ridge' over to the N face and on to the summit. The same party made the second ascent of 'Dome 2', which on this occasion was renamed Nevado Dómine (5708m). Also in the same Cordillera two European groups climbed the W face of Nevado Huayna Potosí (6088m). Austrians Erich Gatt and Martin Wolff did a somewhat zig-zagging variant up the face and had to bivouac close to the summit at  $-25^{\circ}\text{C}$ . The same face was visited a month later by Frenchmen Patrice Gabarrou and Yves Astier who scaled it directly; surprisingly, Astier reported warm temperatures and unstable weather. In south-central Bolivia, immediately south of Illimani (which marks the southernmost end of the Cordillera Real), is the Cordillera de Quimsa Cruz. Evelio Echevarría accomplished on foot, alone, the circumnavigation of the range, entering along the way several unvisited valleys and realizing the first ascents of Curicampana del Sur (5200m), Anco Collo (5460m) and the second of Nuñu Collo (5215m). Weather was stable but cold; on the Amazonian side of the range mists entered the higher valleys in the afternoon (June).

## Argentina

The main South American events for the calendar year 1989 took place in the Argentinian Andes and were the work of local mountaineers. Starting with the district of Ojos del Salado, we have the meritorious results of the expedition sent by the Club Andino Tucumán to the area located south of the highest volcano in the world. Leader of the six-man party was veteran Dr Orlando Bravo (65). On the summit of Cerro Chango (4650m) two of the members found scattered wood, probably left in pre-Columbian times by Calchaquí Indians. Luis Salinas and Claudio Bravo attempted Nevado del Cazadero (6660m), but were chased down by deep snow. The same pair, however, made on 12 January the first ascent of Cerro 6050m, situated in the Arenal valley. They named it Cerro Gendarme Argentino; two other members of the expedition repeated the ascent the following day. The leader and Jorge Madozzo made the second ascent of the imposing Volcán del Viento (6200m), climbed by Poles in 1937. Salinas and Claudio Bravo made another ascent, the second of Cerro Nacimiento II (6460m), also climbed previously by Poles, while Antonio Fons and Madozzo were at the same time reaching the summit of Nacimiento V (6320m), hitherto unclimbed.

Farther south, the exceedingly young climbers of the Club Andino Mercedario have been exploring the area inland from their city of San Juan. Taking advantage of the newly opened international road over the Agua Negra pass to Chile, these youths, led by Marcelo Scanu, made several forays during 1989 that resulted in the first ascent of Nevado de Pismanta (5400m) and the twin summits of Nevado de Bauchaceta (5036 and 5100m). An attempt on Negro Aspero (5500m) failed in a blizzard. The San Juan mountaineers are almost unique in South America in that they manage to climb high mountains in any season.

Luis Alberto Parra, the well-known Mendoza guide, summarized the 1988-89 Aconcagua mountaineering season as follows: heaviest activity concentrates on the mountain between early December and end of January; although Aconcagua is visited and climbed all year round, activity outside those six or so weeks greatly decreases; there were 52 expeditions or parties from the United States, 33 Argentinian, 21 German, 20 Spanish, 16 French, 11 Japanese, and the rest distributed among several countries from Latin America and Europe. The 'speed record' by the normal route (base to summit) established in six hours and 15 minutes by the German Michel Dacher was reduced by two minutes in January 1989 by the American Marty Schmidt. Two other noteworthy ascents in Mendoza province were also on very high peaks: Tupungato (6550m), by its SE gully and SE ridge, in only six days from the city of Mendoza and back, by the Argentinian guide Gabriel Cabrera and the Spaniard Mariano Muñoz (28 January); and Cerro de la Plata, the 5860m-high giant that overlooks the pampas, first winter ascent of the steep E face of the N peak, by José Arboleda and Eduardo Ferllén (12 September).

An unknown number of lesser Mendoza peaks, ranging between 4000 and 5400m, remain unclimbed. They have been left alone for a variety of reasons: lack of notoriety or importance, problematic access (mostly swollen

rivers in the climbing seasons), rather modest height by Argentinian standards and, above all, poor quality of rock. Even in the Aconcagua Provincial Park such peaks can be found. In February last year an Italian party from Venice ascended an unnamed peak in southern Mendoza and named it Cerro Piré (height and location so far unknown). Evelio Echevarría, travelling alone into unvisited valleys situated north and south of Las Cuevas, on the international road to Chile, climbed in January the peaks he named Peñascoso (4180m), Peñas Amarillas (4400m) and Morro Overo (4437m). The local rock was confirmed as extremely unstable.

The 'Andes Australes', as Chileans and Argentinians call their Andes that fall within Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego, registered an activity that more than ever concentrated only on a good rock-climbing area – the Chaltén district. The following remarkable climbs were noted for the climbing season of December 1988–March 1989:

Attempt on Cerro Pollone (2396m), W buttress, to 100m below summit;  
 El Mocho (1980m), new route on left side of E buttress;  
 Torre Innominata (2501m), first ascent of N spur;  
 Aguja Poincenot (3036m) a variant of normal route; and  
 Aguja Guillaumet (2539m), SE face; all by Michel Piola and Daniel Anker (Switzerland).

Aguja de la Silla (2978m), E spur, and  
 Aguja Bífida (2450m), N face, both by Horacio Bresba (Argentina) and Peter Lüthi (Switzerland).

Torre Innominata (2501m), normal route, third ascent (?), by Carlos Domínguez (Argentina) and Peter Lüthi (Switzerland).

H Adams Carter also received from the Argentinian Alberto Tarditti lists of other ascents that are mostly repetitions of normal routes: three climbs of Cerro Torre (Americans, Spaniards and Poles), and numerous ascents of Fitzroy by Italians, Argentinians, Basques and Swiss. All the Patagonian activity reviewed above took place on the Argentinian side of Patagonia.

*Józef Nyka adds:*

### **Patagonia: Aguja de l'S**

A four-member party from Bulgaria led by Alexandr Ruevski intended to climb Fitzroy but had to cancel this plan because of bad weather. Two members of the team took advantage of a calmer day to make a (probably) new route on the SE/E face of the Aguja de l'S in the St Exupéry ridge. In four hours of climbing up to UIAA IV+ to V – in difficulty they reached the top. The whole enterprise took them 14 hours (up and down). The climbers were Miroslav Sevilevski and Valentin Trenev.

The E face of the Aguja de l'S was climbed in 1987 by the Austrians Hans Bärnthaler and Ewald Lidl (400m, UIAA VI). They gave no further details of their route, which seems to be different from that of the Bulgarian ascent.

*David Hillebrandt adds:*

**First Ascent of Roncagli (2300m)  
(Cordillera Darwin, Tierra del Fuego, Chile)**

David Hillebrandt, Julian Mathias and John Mothersele made the first ascent of this magnificent peak by its NW ridge to the N summit in a 20-hour push from an advanced glacial camp. It gave about 1200m of sustained mixed climbing at about TD. The top was reached on 14 January 1990. This was the fifth British expedition to visit the area and attempt the peak. The line climbed had originally been attempted in 1988 by Iain Peters and David Hillebrandt, after they spotted it as a possible route on this complex peak during their ascent of Pico Ohi.

The expedition was in the area for just under a month. It also made a first ascent of Pico Payes de Galles to the east of the Stoppani glacier.