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South America and Antarctica 1992

There has been a large increase in the number of ascents in Patagonia, and a compensatory decrease in activity in Peru. The relatively settled economic and political situations in Chile and Argentina compared with the unrest in Peru have undoubtedly contributed to this. Another factor may have been the reports of unusually unreliable snow conditions in Peru. No significant activity has been reported from Ecuador.

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Peru – Cordilleras Blanca and Huayhuash

The cholera epidemic appears to have burnt itself out and was never really a problem in the mountain regions anyway. In Lima a series of bomb attacks were aimed at the rich suburbs, but in the area around the Cordilleras Blanca and Huayhuash public notaries and businesses were the preferred targets rather than tourists. Later reports from Huaraz (January 1993) say that this level of violence has reduced. Despite all this there were three times as many commercial trekking/climbing groups in 1992 as opposed to 1991. However there were reduced numbers of private parties.

The weather was generally poor with frequent midday snowfall down to 4000m. This hampered activity on harder lines, as did the effects of the deglaciation which have reduced a number of icefields to 'falling granite boulders'. The pattern of wet/dry seasons appears to be shifting, with no snow at all during the normal wet months of December to March 1992. Repeats of popular routes were made and three harder lines:

Artesonraju (6025m) The second and third ascents of the 1979 route on the SW face were made by Argentines Teodoro Plaza, Tony Rodriguez, Marcos Frischknecht and Guy Costa with Australian Duncan Thomas and a Slovenian team. They confirm the difficulties as 800m, 50°–80° ice.

Santa Cruz (6259m) An attempt to climb the 1948 Swiss route was abandoned because the icefields have disappeared.

Huantsan Norte (6113m) Two attempts on the SW ridge were abandoned after continuous midday snowfall.

Bolivia

Huanacuni Eastward (5500m) Ade Miller led a six-member team from Southampton University MC. On 10 July they made the first British ascent of Huanacuni Eastward (5500m).

Argentina and Chile

Many international expeditions have headed for Patagonia where there has been a resurgence of new big wall activity. Local climbers have been similarly busy, mainly in the northern Argentine provinces of San Juan, Mendoza and La Rioja but also taking their fair share of Patagonian routes and visiting Peru.

Argentine Province of Mendoza

Cerro Cuerno (Horcones) (5462m) The locals Daniel Pizarro and Horacio Cuneti climbed a new route on this in January via a steep icefall and technical ground.

Aconcagua (6954m) Thierry Spichiger, Michel Vincent, and Jean-Paul Virnat took three days to climb the *Paragot route* on the S face combining it with the *Messner finish* on the 27 December 1991. The Frenchman Frederic Vallet then followed them up in 19 hours. An American couple meanwhile climbed this, the N variant of the normal, and the *Polish route*.

Patagonia – Northern Ice cap

Cerro San Valentin (3910m) The fifth ascent of this remote mountain was made by the SE ridge. An Argentinian party consisting of Edgar Krautner, Matias Kurtscheidt, Tomas Nunez, and Martin Schopflocher travelled by boat to Laguna San Rafael where they met with a Chilean party led by Claudio Galvez. After hauling sledges for 65km they climbed the ridge and summited in bad weather on 22 January 1992.

Southern Ice cap Traverses

An international expedition composed of Alberto del Castillo, Marcos Couch, Gabriel Ruiz, Alexandre Portela, and Jose Tamayo flew from Coihaique in Chile to Caleta Torte. They then went by boat to Golfo Calen and traversed the ice cap between 14 April and 4 May 1992, finishing at El Chalten in Argentina after 160km. A Spanish pair, Joaquin Colorado and Fabrizio Scanarino, skied a 100km route via Paso Marconi and Paso del Viento.

Fitzroy and Cerro Torre Groups

Fitzroy (3405m) The Swiss trio of Michael Pitelka, Kaspar Ochsner, and Ruth Baldinger climbed *El Corazon* on the E wall between the *Ferrari/Meles '76 route* of the E pillar and the *Yugoslav route* of the Devil's Dihedral. They began on 13 December 1991 and reached the summit on 20 February 1992 (1400m 5.10 A4/45)

Fitzroy The *Argentine route* was climbed by Teo Plaza and a Spaniard on 24 January 1992.

Aguja Poincenot (3002m) Argentines Maximo Schneider and Oscar Pandolfi climbed the *Whillans route* on 29 January 1992, as did Ramiro Calvo, Teo Plaza and two Brazilians.

Aguja Poincenot Americans Steve Gerberding and Jay Smith climbed the SW face by a route called *Judgment Day* (VI 5.11 A1) to summit on 28 January 1992. This is reported to be a well protected route which may follow the Argentine line in the upper part.

Aguja Guillaumet (2579m) This was soloed by the Argentine Horacio Bresba before a pair of women from Buenos Aires, Patricia Malatesta and Marcela Antonucci, made the first all-female ascent. It was also climbed by Martin Greche and Pablo de la Fueste on 20 February 1992.

Aiguille de Saint-Exupery (2680m) The '87 *route* on the S arête was repeated in 24 hours by Jon Lazkano and S de la Cruz on 10 December 1991 (ED 700m), reporting good snow and superb rock.

Aguja de l'S (2335m) The second ascent of the *Austrian route* was made by Argentines Bernado Roil, Damian Llabres, and Hernan del Ri on 26 March 1992. This takes the E dihedral then the NE buttress (V 55° ice).

Cerro Torre (3102m) Jon Krauker and Don Cauthorn made the fourth ascent of the '74 *Ferrari route* on the W face in a very fast time from 13 to 15 January 1992. The *Maestri route* was repeated by three parties.

Cerro El Mocho (1953m) This summit forms the final peak thrusting from Cerro Torre's Compressor Arête. With easy access it has seven routes on its flanks, and Jay Smith and Steve Gerberding climbed another route on the S face called *Back to Front*. After fixing the bottom five pitches they climbed the top four on 2 January 1992 (VI/5.10/A4).

Cerro El Mocho Between the S and E pillars is an ice couloir which rarely comes into condition. This was first climbed in 1986 by Italians and was repeated by Giorgio Passino, Patrick Gabarrou and François Marsigny.

Aguja Bifida Norte (2394m, the highest (N) top) The Italians Casimiro Ferrari, Corrado Valsecchi, and Manuele Panzori climbed a route on the ESE buttress. Austrians Toni Ponzholzer and Tommy Bonipace climbed another new route between Ferraris and Luthi's on the SE face before going on to climb the *Pefil del Indio* and the *Cuatro Dedos*.

Paine Group

Cerro Catedral (2200m) Two expeditions based in French valley climbed routes on the splendid E face of this peak. The Americans John Catto, Charlie Fowler, Peter Gallagher and Messagre Kewdel climbed the logical central zone over 14 days with a final 5 day push to give *La Escoba de Dios* (VI 5.10 A4), summing on 26 January 1992. Further to the left the Italian team of Paolo Fanton, Fabio Leoni, Mario Manica, and Danny Zampicoli created the originally named *Il Volo del Condor* (ED+ 850m VII- A3), summing on 2

February 1992. This takes the steepest line up the pillar forming the left side of the face, and they report scope for many more lines.

Torre Sur del Paine (2500m) The French pair of Vincent Sprungli and Michel Piola were particularly active this year. On the 19 January they began equipping a line up the centre of the 900m E face, to the right of the 1985 attempt by the US/SA trio. After fixing the lower 500m they went for it and created *Dans l'Oeil du Cyclone* (900m ED+ French 6b A4) reaching the summit on 28 February 1992.

Torre Central del Paine (2454m) The 1200m E face saw two lines in the 91/92 period. Britons Paul Pritchard, Sean Smith, Simon Yates and Noel Crane created the uncompromising line of *El Regalo de Mowana* on 25 January 1992 after 25 days of climbing. The line takes the centre of the face and uses no bolts (1200m ABO- 5.10 A4). Further to the left *La Ballena de los Vientos* takes the E flank of the S pillar. Sebastian de la Cruz, Erik Brand, Steve Hayward, Jose Tamayo and John Lazkano climbed this in 20 days to finish on 24 November 1991. The line frees mediocre rock in the lower and upper parts and is entirely artificial in the centre section (1000m ED+ French 6a/b A3).

Torre Norte del Paine (2260m) On 14 January 1992 Piola and Sprungli climbed *La Ultima Esperanza* on the E face in one day using very little aid and report that it may go free in good conditions (French 6c A2 600m TD+). Two other parties made ascents of the normal route on the S arête. An Italian team completed the ascent of the left summit, which was probably unclimbed.

Evelio Echevarría writes:

In recent years the popularity of the Parque Nacional Torres del Paine has increased, but so have its ecological problems. Appeals and regulations seem to produce meagre results. In 1990, 110 Latin American students cleaned Aconcagua spotless from top to bottom. In 1991 the Italian climber Mario Manica removed all the refuse lying at the base of the Torres del Paine.

Stronger solutions are now being sought and Latin American national park experts are watching with interest an Argentinian experiment. Authorities of the Parque Aconcagua have raised the entry fee from US\$12 to US\$80 per visitor and rangers now give you a plastic bag with the instruction to bring down all your refuse. This unpleasant policy has met with great success. Will the Chileans follow the Argentinian example?

Antarctica

Mount Vinson (5271m) Doug Scott, Sharu Prabhu and Roger Mear led six clients to the summit of Mount Vinson on 7 December 1992.

Mount Shinn Two of Doug Scott's clients, Andre Hedger and Sundeep Dhillon, climbed Mount Shinn.