

David Šťastný on Macaroni-Porridge Junction, trying to find a link to El Regalo de Mwoma some 100 meters above. (The team was forced to pendulum.)

FILIP SILHAN

on a starry night, hoping to reach the summit. At 2 a.m. we decided to make a bivy and continue in the morning. It was a beautiful sunrise and we saw that we were almost at the top. It took us four pitches to get to a false summit. For the last couple of meters we untied from the rope and soloed to the correct top. On February 17 at 10 a.m. we reached the highest point of the Central Tower of Paine and enjoyed the excellent views. We stayed for about 30 minutes and then started to descend. By evening, we reached the spire at the beginning of the crack with our haulbags and portaledges. It took us the next day to get down on the glacier. The last four days we suffered from terrible thirst because we had no water. We named our variation *Macaroni-Porridge Junction* and graded it 8 A3+. We placed ten bolts and about 30 pitons.

FILIP ŠILHAN, Czech Republic

South Tower, Southeast Buttress, Hoth. On December 22, 1999, Sean Easton and I arrived at the entrance of Torres del Paine National Park with four porters. In three days, with the help of the porters, we managed to move most of our gear to our chosen Advanced Base Camp at the base of the glacier.

moved slightly to the left. After having climbed 12 pitches, we got to a dead end. We had to decide whether to turn back and continue more to the right or to make a pendulum to the left and join the 1992 British route, *El Regalo de Mwoma*. We chose the second option and found ourselves in a thin crack about 50 meters above an obvious spire. The terrible weather stopped us for the next two days, which we spent in our portaledges. We continued on February 13, when the weather improved slightly. The free climbing was over. Up to this point, the hardest pitch was about 8 (5.11d).

Our progress slowed down to 50 to 100 meters a day. We started to discover what "British aiding" is all about. There were no bolts on belays and in some places even no pitons. We had to admire the boldness of the Britons.

On the eighth day of the climb, we got to a tiny ledge. From this point we set out on our summit push. We took just our sleeping bags and light food for two days. It seemed to us that the crack would never end. We still had to aid all the pitches. Suddenly, the gradient of the wall broke off. We continued



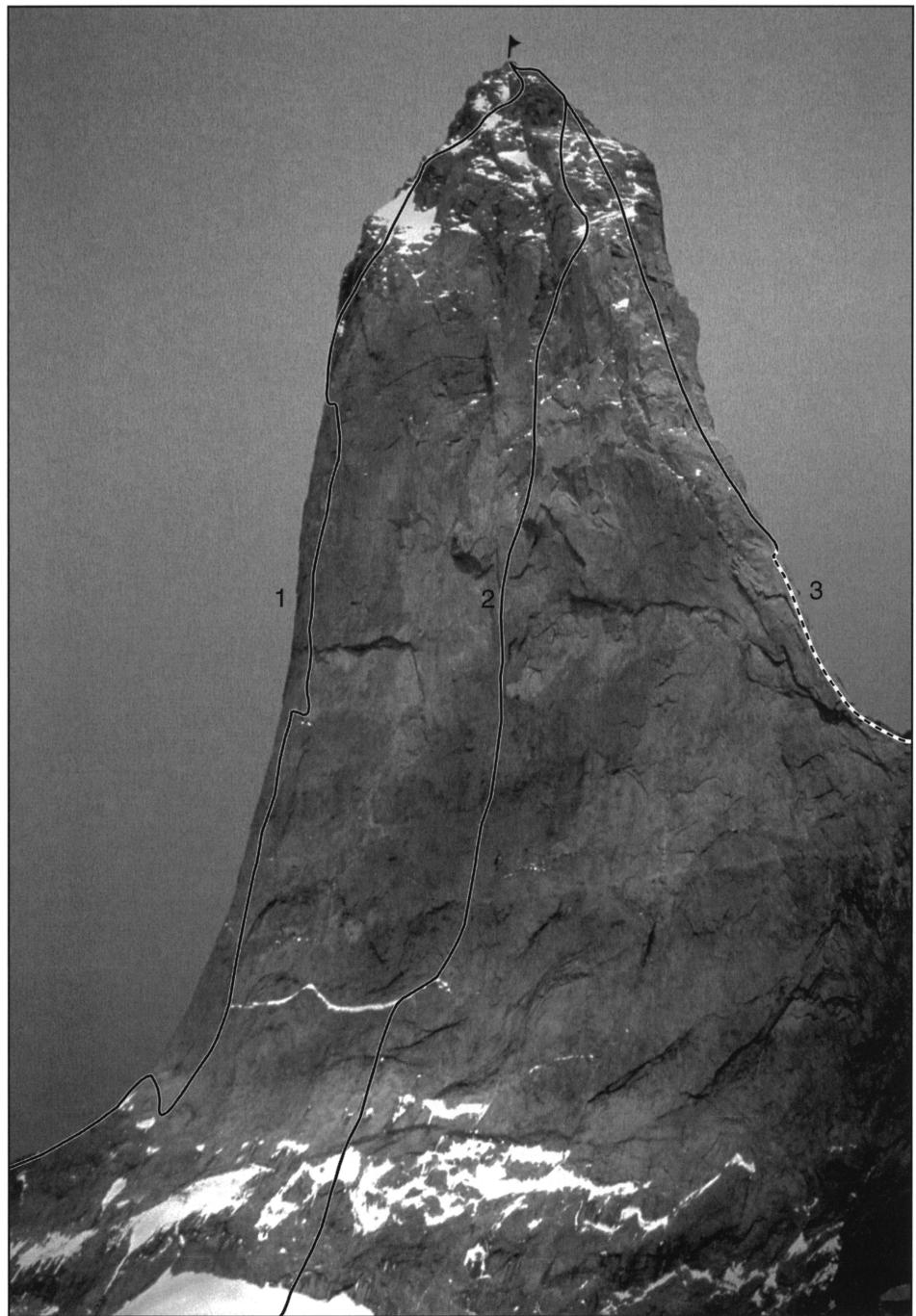
The south face of the South Tower of Paine, with the Central Tower on the right. Notes Conny Amelunxen, "After seeing and hearing the winds blast around the edge from the south face, it is very clear to me why it is unclimbed." Hoth follows the right skyline; Lungo Sogno (Leoni et al., 1987) follows the left skyline. CONNY AMELUNXEN

Sean and I continued moving gear up the glacier to the base of the South Tower of Paine. With all our equipment at the base of the wall and one pitch fixed, we descended for the New Year's celebrations. The day we went back to Puerto Natales, the closest town to the park, the weather turned and storm after storm started coming in. When we returned to the park a week later, one of the transfers had to negotiate two and half feet of water over sections of the road.

After another week of waiting at Base Camp, the weather improved marginally, allowing us to reach our Advanced Base Camp. Four days of impeccable weather followed. We climbed to our first wall camp site over two days, then returned to the ground, leaving five 60-meter lines fixed. After a day of hauling, we blasted, pulling up our ropes. As we went up the fixed lines, we watched an enormous storm materialize around us. The storm lasted four days. Originally we left the ledge only to accommodate bodily functions. On the last several days, we didn't even leave the ledge for this. Five days later we rappelled. We had eaten a third of our food without advancing and had to go down for more.

On January 25, we committed ourselves to the wall. The afternoon looked promising; however, on the two-hour hike from ABC to our fixed lines, the temperature dropped more than 25 degrees to -15° C. We jugged iced ropes, skidding all over verglas. Over the next two weeks, the temperature might have risen above freezing once or twice.

Within the first five days, we fixed and hauled the next three pitches to establish Camp II.



The east face of the South Tower of Paine, showing 1. Hoth (Amelunxen-Easton, 2000). 2. En el Ojo del Huracán (Piola-Sprungli, 1992). 3. Italian Route (Aiazzi-Aste-Casati-Nusdeo-Taldo, 1963). A South African team climbed 22 pitches on the east face in 1985. An accident turned them back 150 meters from the summit. SEAN EASTON

The weather went spiraling downward quickly. The inverted spindrift avalanches imprisoned us in our portaledge, where we were hammered by ferocious gusts of Patagonian wind. With our supplies being steadily depleted, we were forced to climb through conditions that were less than hospitable.

Thirteen days later, the alarm went off and I peeked outside. Thinking I was dreaming, I went back to sleep. When I woke an hour later, the day was calm and cloudless. I started up the first fixed line at 9 a.m.; Sean followed shortly after. When he finished the last aid pitch, we screwed together our ice tools and changed to alpine mode. We were on the summit of the South Tower of Paine at 7:40 p.m. From the summit, we were able to see the Patagonia ice cap, Fitz Roy, Cerro Torre and the never-ending pampas disappeared into the east. Seven rappels later we were at the top of our fixed lines. It was dark. The wind had picked up again. Over the next four hours, we battled for our lives to get down those fixed lines. The first two got stuck when we tried to pull them. We had no option but to go down. The next pair got hung up. We were forced to rap our last two ropes to camp and wait for better conditions. At 2 a.m. we arrived at CII, exhausted. Hour upon hour, the wind persisted and our paranoia mounted. Our last two ropes were fixed above us, being tormented by a wind that is famous for cutting ropes. The next evening the wind slowed. Without wasting a moment we jumped out of the ledge to rescue the lines. We had climbed the entire route in 60-meter pitches. Our dilemma was that one of the last two ropes was only 50 meters. Although we had to make several extra rappels, the descent went smoothly. After rescuing our haul bags from a few crevasses, we were in town on February 12, having established *Hoth* (VI 5.10+ A4 WI2/3, 1100m, 27 pitches) on the southeast buttress of the South Tower of Paine in 24 days, including 19 nights in a portaledge, in a capsule-style ascent of the wall with an alpine-style summit push.

CONNIE AMELUNXEN, Canada

ARGENTINE PATAGONIA

Fitz Roy, Supercanaleta, Attempt, and Aguja Poincenot and Aguja Guillaumet, First Winter Ascents. Paul Ramsden, Jim Hall, Nick Lewis and Andy Kirkpatrick were in Argentine Patagonia from June 20-July 20, 1999. Setting off at 2 a.m. on July 1, we found deep unconsolidated powder in the initial section of Fitz Roy's *Supercanaleta*. As height was gained, this changed to powder-covered rock slabs before eventually thin ice was reached after 300 meters. There then followed pitch after pitch of very thin ice.

At half-height, the gully opens and gradually peters out. We climbed several steep rock pitches in order to reach the obvious chimney line above. This was quite hard with difficult route finding. What followed were many pitches of extremely hard (Scottish VII) and uncompromising climbing before the first half-reasonable ledge in a basin was reached at 2 a.m. From the basin, we climbed straight up and were treated to many pitches of excellent mixed climbing, with ice smears, snow-filled cracks and nasty offwidths all adding to the fun.

We broke out onto the ridge proper at about mid-afternoon. Beneath the so-called Second Pinnacle, we found a reasonable ledge and decided to stop for the night. The weather by this time had deteriorated considerably, but we hoped it would blow itself out over night as many of the previous storms had.

Unfortunately, it did not. Several times our bivy tent was actually picked up off the ground with all four of us in it. (In Chalten, the Ranger Station recorded winds up to 120 m.p.h., and that's in the valley). Dawn eventually arrived with no improvement in the weather, but we