

The East Face of Trango's Nameless Tower

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THE EAST FACE OF THE NAMELESS TOWER of the Trango Towers rises for more than 1000 meters. From June 24 to July 14 Swiss Erhard Loretan and I worked out a new route on that virgin face. This was the first two-man ascent of what may be the most beautiful rock spire in the world.

The 29-pitch line runs up excellent, crystalline, golden granite in a region of unsurpassed beauty. The route rises in the center of the face up a distinctive line of big dihedrals topped by rock roofs and occasionally by huge snow mushrooms that cling precariously to the wall. The upper part ascends a seemingly compact, smooth, golden shield where we were lucky enough to find excellent cracks which we could connect together by three pendulum traverses. Most of the pitches required aid climbing, done almost exclusively with nuts or Friends. It is worth mentioning that the rock is very attractive and promises the opportunity for a totally free ascent in the future. The aid-climbing difficulties at times reached A3. Free climbing at such a high altitude is more difficult to assess. Therefore, I would simply grade it as of UIAA Grade VI.

We spent a total of 14 action days on the climb, split into three sections. Eight were exclusively climbing days. Three were spent both climbing and hauling loads. Another three were used retreating and load carrying. It would be unwise to expect too long a stretch of fine weather in the Karakoram. Therefore, we had to resort to a semi-alpine style. While sleeping on the wall in one or the other of the only possible bivouac places, we progressed day after day, fixing rope and abseiling for the night to the bivouac site. Thus we did not lose the benefit of our hard work when the inevitable breakdown of the weather forced us back to Base Camp.

We set up Base Camp on the Dunge Glacier at 4000 meters on June 20. On June 24, after a night approach with huge, 35-kilogram packs, we reached the base of the tower at 5200 meters. For the next two days, we fixed 300 meters of rope on the initial rock spur and up the snow band. Then on June 26, we returned to Base Camp.

We planned the next trip as the final one, provided the weather would allow it. Of course, it did not. On July 2, with loads of only 25 kilograms but still



PLATE 14

Photo by Wojciech Kurtyka

**The Polish-Swiss Route on
TRANGO's NAMELESS TOWER.**

PLATE 15

Photos by Wojciech Kurtyka

**Mushroom Chimney just below
Summit of NAMELESS TOWER.**

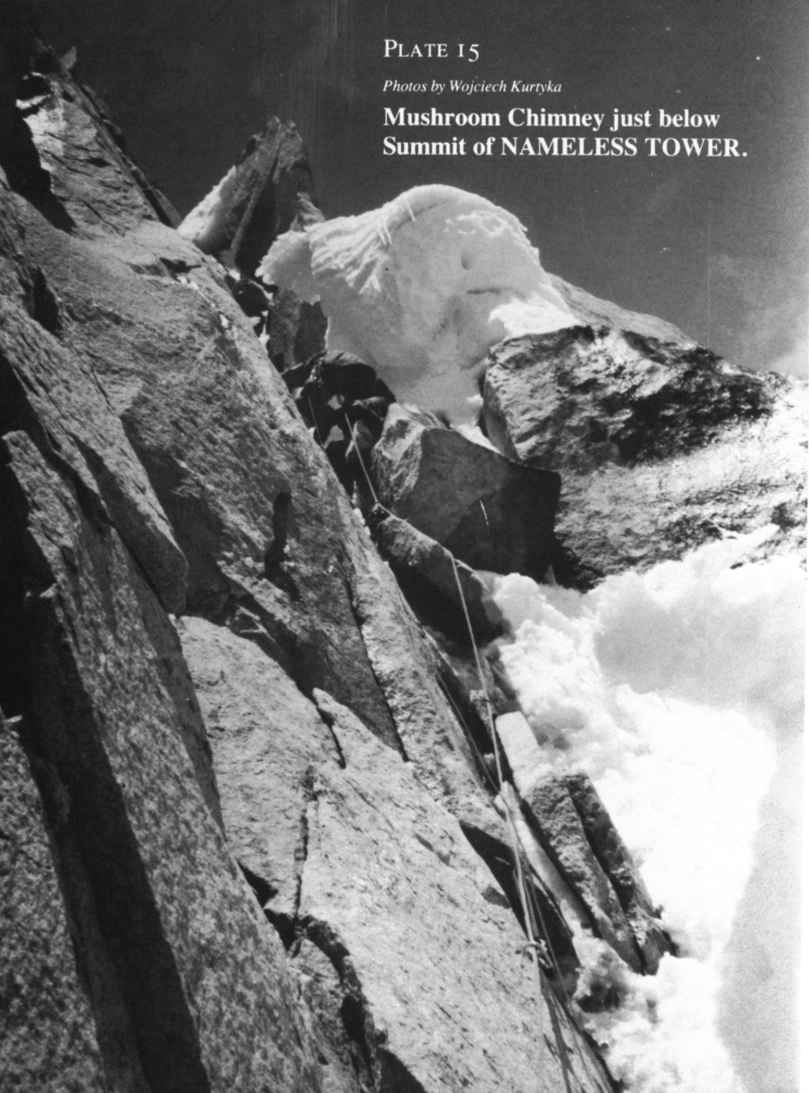


PLATE 16

**On TRANGO's NAMELESS
TOWER.**

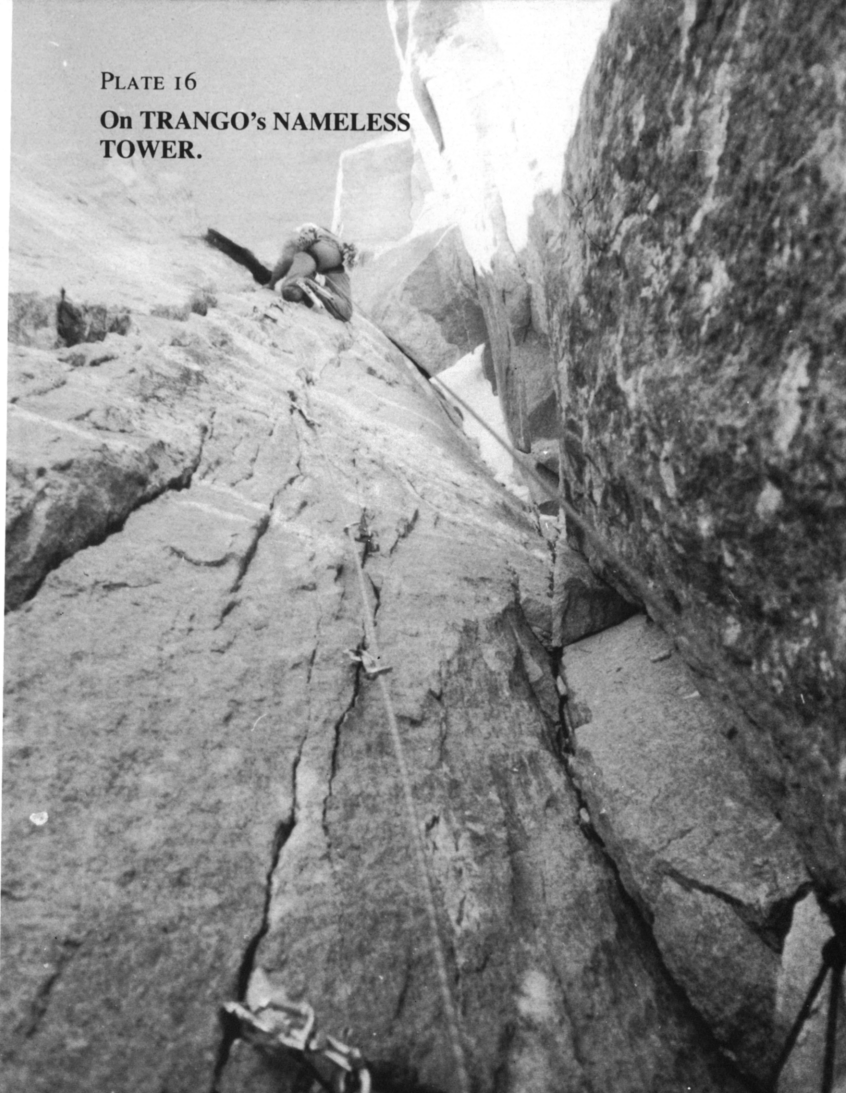


PLATE 17

Photo by Wojciech Kurtyka

**The Double Crack on the Summit
Wall of NAMELESS TOWER.**



heavy enough nearly to sabotage us on the fixed ropes, we again reached the snow band, where we arranged our first bivouac site. During the next three days we climbed the big dihedrals. On July 5, we got to the base of the pyramid in a soaking snowstorm. That night, the weather grew even worse. The wall got plastered with wet snow and our bivouac equipment was running water. On the morning of July 6, we had no choice but to retreat, but we had fixed another 300 meters of rope above the snow band.

The third and final try started on July 9. On that day, we ascended the 1200 meters of the approach gully, jumared 600 meters and to end the day climbed one more pitch. To our great joy, this cleared the greatest unknown on the route. On the top of the pyramid we discovered a small rock ledge, detached from the wall. Although it sloped somewhat downward, it was good enough to use for our second bivouac site. Above the pyramid we found the "fantastic crack," the "double crack," then the "hidden dihedral" and the "wet slab," and finally the "Mushroom Chimney." The latter was choked with big snow mushrooms, but it emerged on the summit ridge. After two ice pitches and an unexpected 25-meter-high rock step, we reached the summit at three P.M. on July 13. On the last rock step, we joined a previous route and found old pitons, probably left by one of the successful 1987 teams. That night we abseiled to the bivouac site.

In the night another week of heavy snowstorms began. Still, we managed, after removing three fixed ropes below, to reach the base of the tower in the afternoon hours.

The fresh memory of the days spent on the Nameless Tower prompts me to compare this technically-extreme, big-wall ascent with two-man ascents on 8000-meter peaks. There are those who identify the forward phase of the sport with the 8000ers, a very false conviction to my way of thinking. The Trango climb called for much more versatile technical and physical faculties. The tactics on the Trango Tower were much more intricate since the wall section, though lower, was much longer and required much more gear. Even more surprising, the Trango climb demanded, at least from me, much harder physical effort than any of the 8000ers. We two carried 120 kilograms of food and equipment and each of us jumared 3000 meters. We worried about rope wear on the knife-sharp crystalline granite. We took occasional falls as our finger tips suffered in this heavy work.

Summary of Statistics:

AREA: Baltoro Karakoram, Pakistan.

NEW ROUTE: Nameless Tower of the Trango Towers, 6251 meters, 20,510 feet, East Face, Summit reached July 13, 1988 (Wojciech Kurtyka, *Polish*, Erhard Loretan, *Swiss*).