

Towers on January 18, we started the very next day to take advantage of each period of calm weather. The South Tower is the highest (c. 2500 meters, 8202 feet), the wildest and the most distant from Base Camp. It takes four and a half hours to reach the foot of the east face from there. Only two routes had previously been completed on the tower. There had been at least two tries made before on the 900-meter-high east face, including the attempt in 1985 by American Craig Peer and South Africans David Davies and Johnathan Gordon; they climbed to about 200 meters from the summit when Peer's leg was shattered by a falling rock, necessitating a dramatic rescue. (See *AAJ*, 1986, pages 87-95.) Their route was to the left of ours. Being only two and having only four weeks to spend, we placed a camp at the foot of the wall and for four days fixed ropes up to the steepest part of the wall (A3 and A4). Despite fog and falling snow on the morning of January 28, we climbed the 500 meters to our high point and continued on. By good luck, the weather cleared and we forced our way to the summit by eight P.M. The rock was very compact and called for numerous hooks, copperheads and knifeblades. The snow on the upper part softened so much that it was impossible at midday. We called the route "En el Ojo del Huracán" (In the Eye of the Hurricane). After evacuating the camp and all traces from the face, we turned to the west face of the Torre Norte. Only one route had previously been climbed on this tower, the south ridge. Although the east face of this two-peaked tower appears rotten, the rock on the west face is magnificent, but the wall is particularly exposed to the wind. Sprungli and I completed the 500-meter-high climb in 22 hours from Base Camp to the summit and back on February 14. We left in place only 3 pitons, 2 wedges and some nuts with slings, used for rappels. We called it "La Última Esperanza" (The Last Hope). After our departure, the face to the left of the north summit was climbed by two different new routes: by Italians Mânica, Leoni and Zampiccoli and by Briton Pritchard and South African Lloyd. [For these climbs, see below.]

MICHEL PIOLA*, *Club Alpin Suisse*

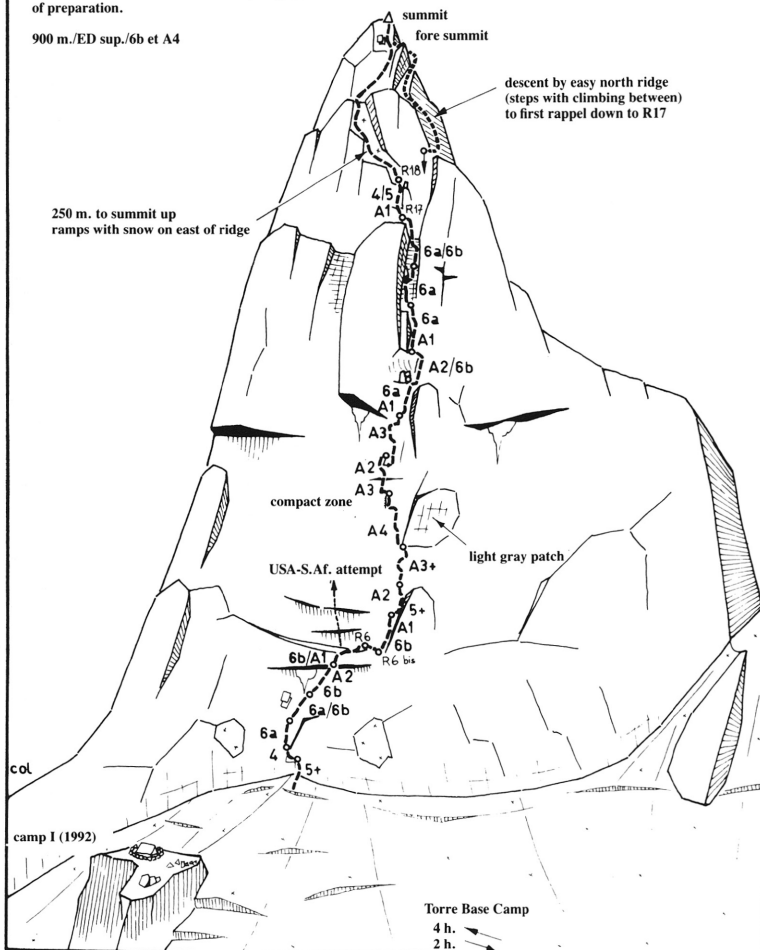
La Catedral, East Face. We saw a picture of La Catedral on a postcard. With no more information than that, John Catto, leader, Peter Gallagher, Max Kendall and I arrived in Patagonia on New Years Day, 1992, intent on making the first ascent of the striking east face. [The only previous ascent had been made by British climbers via the west face in 1971. See *AAJ*, 1971, page 432.] A week later, we had established Base Camp in the Valle del Francés. The face proved bigger and harder than we had imagined it, over 3000 feet high with no obvious weaknesses. Working from a snow cave at the base of the wall, we spent ten days slowly fixing lines up the beautiful white granite. Typical Patagonian weather kept progress to a crawl; we were continually buffeted by high winds and rain. After we had used up all our fixed lines, we began the waiting game for a spell

* For the ascent of the east face of the Torre Sur del Paine, Piola and Sprungli were given the prestigious award, the Piolet d'Or, for what was considered the best climb of 1992.

TORRE SUR DEL PAINE “En el ojo del huracán”

- Superb “Big-Wall” route with a very steep, compact technical central section.
- First part with good gray rock; second part with very solid magnificent red granite.
- First ascent: Michel Piola/Vincent Sprungli, January 28, 1992 after 4 days of preparation.

900 m./ED sup./6b et A4

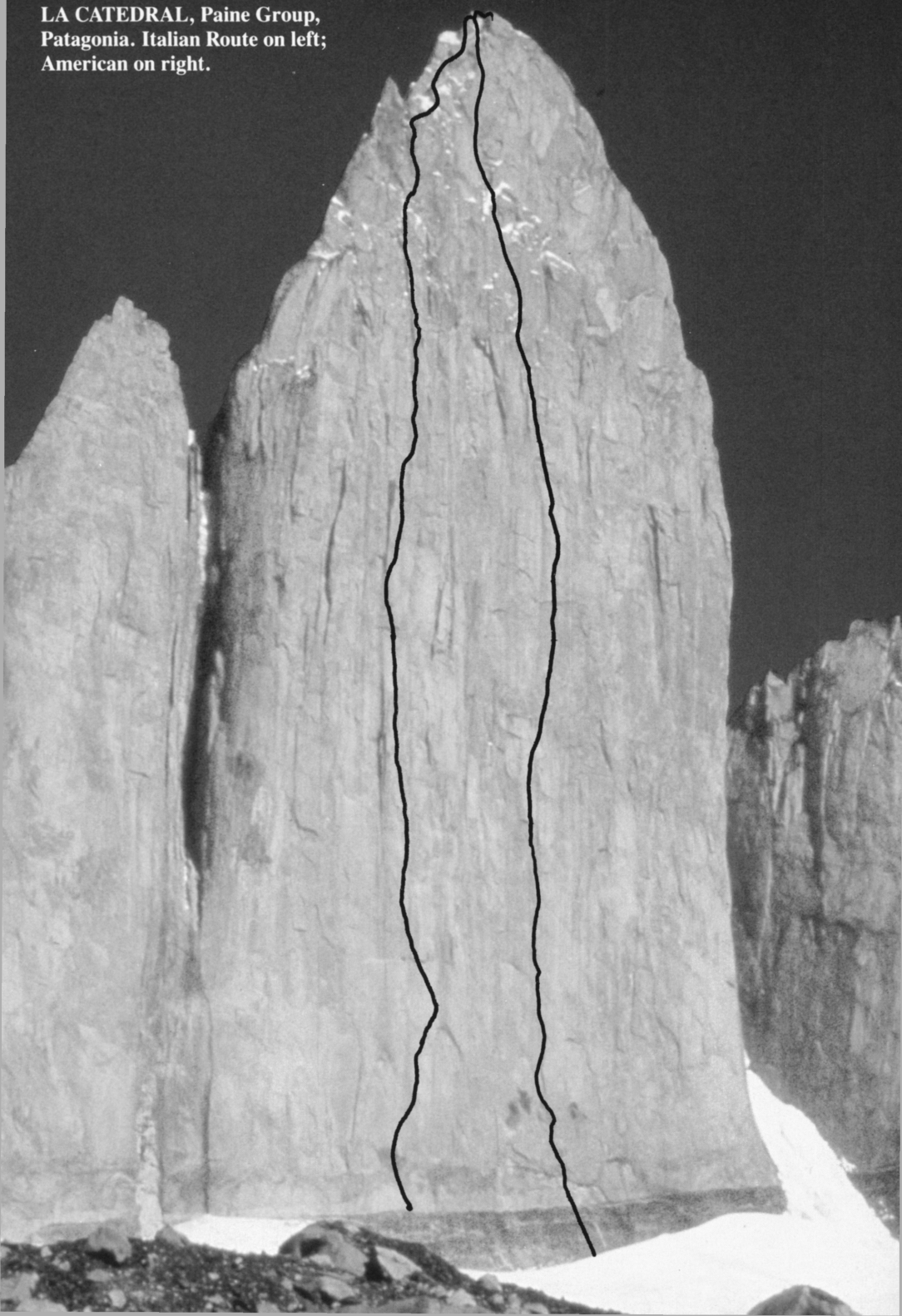


Michel Piola

PLATE 56

Photo by Fabio Leoni

**LA CATEDRAL, Paine Group,
Patagonia. Italian Route on left;
American on right.**



of settled weather. Fortunately, we didn't have to wait long. Four days of challenging climbing brought us to the summit on January 26. The east face is slightly concave; our route goes up the middle, following corner systems till we reached the summit ridge a bit left of the top. The climbing was mostly aid till the last few pitches where we were treated to delightful free-climbing on perfect rock. Another day was spent rappelling the route. (VI, 5.10, A4+; 29 pitches, 1000 meters.) We were followed by Italians. [See below.] They took a line to the left of ours, up a buttress that defines the left edge of the east face. Their route angled right at the top joining our route at our third bivouac and following it from there to the top.

CHARLES FOWLER

La Catedral, Southeast Face, and Torre Norte del Paine, West Face. Fabio Leoni, Danny Zampiccoli, Paola Fanton, Flavia Menotti and I spent January and February in the Paine region. We placed Base Camp at the foot of the southeast face of La Catedral in the Valle del Francés. We began the climbing on January 12. La Catedral is one of the most spectacular towers of Patagonia, but it is little known because of the difficulty of approach. Our route was very similar to climbs on El Capitan with cracks and dihedrals of an incredible steepness on beautiful rock. The climb begins immediately with very difficult pitches (VII+, A3+). In the first 700 meters of the 1000 meters of the ascent, there is barely a place to stand comfortably. We climbed on eight days with two bivouacs on the wall. At 3:30 P.M. on February 2, Leoni, Zampiccoli, Signora Fanton and I reached the summit in a strong snowstorm. On February 21, Zampiccoli, Leoni and I made a new route on the west face of the Torre Norte del Paine to the north summit of the peak; this route lies to the left of the new British-South African route. The excellent rock and difficulties not over VI+, A2 allowed us to do the climb in a single day, aided by ropes left on the face during an attempt by another expedition. [From another source, we learn that Signor Mànica was struck during the descent by rockfall which broke his leg. A difficult evacuation by helicopter followed.—*Editor.*] Because of climbers who seem to have little respect or love for nature, the incredible beauty of this region is being ruined by filth left at the camps and on the moraines and hundreds of meters of rope abandoned on the faces. This has happened in the last few years. In the very near future this little paradise will be destroyed. We did our best to remedy the situation. It would take little effort if all were to do their part.

MARIO MÀNICA, *Club Alpino Italiano*

Paine Chico, West Face and Torre Norte del Paine, North Summit, West Face. It had stormed for days and when it dawned fine on February 19, South African Philip Lloyd and I slumbered late. Not until nine A.M. did we awake with shock and horror and virtually run up to the massive apron and tower I had spotted from the east face of the Torre Central. We arrived at the base of Paine Chico's west