



*Cerro Piergiorgio, showing Esperando la Cumbre (Cerro Pollone is to the right). GIANLUCA MASPES*

day we descended to the Piedra del Fraile.

On December 8, I made the third solo ascent of Aguja Guillaumet's entire northwest spur (following the 1990 Giordani variation plus the 1965 Argentine route) (VII- AO, 1000m) in five hours, self-belaying on only the most difficult pitch.

GIANLUCA MASPES, *Italy*

*Cerro Marconi Norte.* It was reported that Maurizio Giordani climbed a new route (5.5, 500m), solo, on the north flank of Cerro Marconi Norte, on December 9, 1996. (*High Mountain Sports* 176)

*Effects Of El Niño On Patagonia's 1997-'98 Climbing Season.* Briefly explained, El Niño is a sporadic warm water current that flows clockwise from west to east along the equator and then south along South America's west coast against the normal polar current. In an "El Niño year," water temperature on the South American coast rises about 3°C, increasing rainfall significantly. Peru usually is the most severely affected country and influences in Chile decrease with higher southern latitudes.

According to locals, the winter of 1997 was mild and warmer than usual, and spring was rainy, also with temperatures above average. But then, after a still rainy January, almost three continuous weeks of good weather followed in February! El Niño revealed itself not only as a long period of good weather, but also with higher temperatures during 1997. The snow line on the Southern Patagonian Icefield was much higher this year than usual. Crossing the Icefield became a painful adventure. In February, Soames Flowerree (Chile), José Vélez (Ecuador), Derek Churchil (Chile) and Ralph Rynning (Norway), who crossed the Southern Patagonian Icefield from Jorge Montt Glacier to Paso del Viento, had to work very hard under