

small nameless glacier near Mascara, we could only climb on six. Three hundred meters of rope were fixed in three climbing days to the col between Mascara and Cuerno Norte. We wanted to climb *Duncan's Dihedral* (IV 5.11 A1), but the cracks were icy and the rock full of snow. Instead, we climbed six new pitches that we called *Kurz vor Knapp* (5.10 A2) before connecting with *Duncan's Dihedral*, but at about 200 meters below the summit, the boys were forced to turn back because of the bad conditions. (Anke had remained at the col.) On January 10, Robert had to leave to go back to Germany.

After a goodbye party for Robert in Puerto Natales, we returned to the Refugio los Cuernos (where the Rio del Valle Bader enters the Lago Nordenskjöld), the site of our new camp. The weather was incredibly good and we had three good days of climbing on the Cuernos. On January 14, we opened a new route on Cuerno Este which we named *Condorito* (6b+). It is a 300-meter line on the east face in very good granite; after two pitches of slabs, it follows a perfect crack system. The climb starts at the steeper part of the wall where the slabs drop down to Valle Bader (until recently referred to as the Valle Pingo; see *AAJ* 1999, pp. 330-332).

Three days later, on January 17, Cuerno Chico (a.k.a. Cuernito) awaited us. We started to the left of the yellow-reddish rock and continued after the third pitch in the steeper part to the right. *Pluma del Condor* (6b) is 300 meters long. Both routes end just before the black sedimentary rock starts.

Back from climbing, we waited another two days for good weather and then decided to leave the park. Since we had planned to climb in alpine style, we had just a minimum of climbing gear with us, and on January 19 we left in kayaks from the Refugio, crossed the Lago Nordenskjöld and got a ride to Natales from the Podeto. With kayaks, even coming to the Refugio was very simple because you can enter the Rio Paine near the Laguna Amarga and then paddle down the river and cross the lake, which takes about two hours.

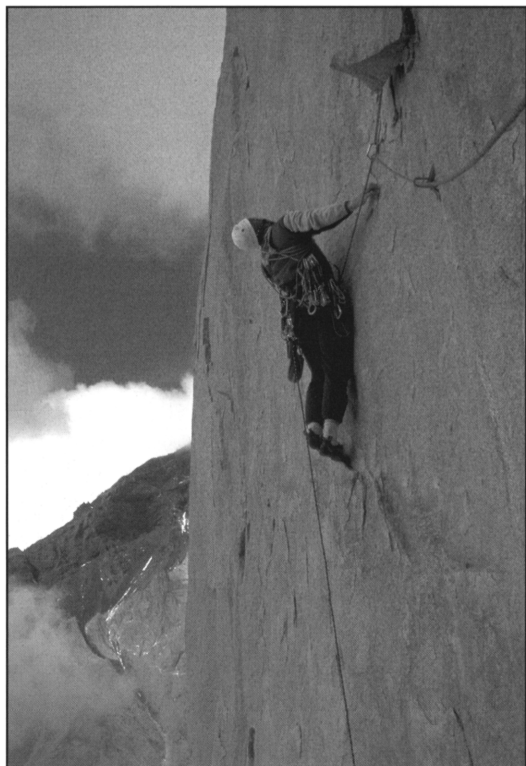
CARSTEN VON BIRCKHAHN and ANKE CLAUSS, *Germany*

*Espada, Chilly Willy.* From January 21-February 8, Thierry Bionda and Jean Michell Zweieracker (Switzerland) put up a new route on the west face of Espada in the Valle del Frances. *Chilly Willy* (VI A3 5.8, 250m) was reported to have excellent granite. The day of the ascent was February 2.

SERGIO ECHEVERRIA and HERNAN JOFRE, *Chile*

*Central Tower of Paine, Macaroni-Porridge Junction.* Our team was composed of three members: Filip Šilhan, Marek Holeček and David Šťastný. We left for Patagonia on January 26 with the aim of climbing one of the routes on the 1200-meter east face of the Central Tower of Paine as free as possible. We arrived at Campo Torres on January 31 in typical Patagonian weather. There was only one climbing team at the camp and two more in the Japanese Camp higher in the valley. Everybody was waiting for a bit more bearable weather. Within the next week we got our material to Advanced Base Camp beneath the towers. The weather improved quickly on February 7, so the next day we set out on our climb.

With our first experience of Patagonian weather, we put off our original plan of climbing the 1991 German route, *Riders on the Storm*. Instead, we started on the right side of the wall, mostly following the line of the 1974 South African route, where we found old fixed ropes, all of them severely cut. For the first three pitches we shared the belays of this line, then



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 ŠILHAN

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

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.