

*Cerro Fitz Roy, Diedro Directo.* Ben Gilmore and I completed a new variation to the Casarotto Route on the North (Goretta) Pillar of Fitz Roy. *Diedro Directo* (VI 5.10 A3, 32 pitches) has 12 new pitches of climbing before joining the old Casarotto line. We fixed ten pitches and then summited in three days on February 20, making the sixth ascent of the peak from the North Pillar. (The route follows a big dihedral that splits the base of the North Pillar between the Casarotto and the Polish route, *Devil's Dihedral*).

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*Fitz Roy, Czechoslovakian Route.* In February, 2000, Alan Mullin (Scotland) and I began the Czechoslovakian Route on the west face of Fitz Roy from the Polish Camp, a bivy site situated just above the Torre Glacier in its lateral moraine. This site is roughly 45 minutes from the couloir we used to access our climb and five hours above the Campamento Bridwell (a.k.a. Campo de Agostini) Base Camp. A prior lull in the weather had allowed us to stash gear and food on the first rock buttress 280 meters into the couloir. No fixed lines were employed on our climb, just a cache left at the beginning of the technical climbing. With the advent of good weather we moved together, simul-climbing the initial mixed ground (mainly easy mixed with two short 85° sections) to the prominent feature of Sitting-Man Ridge. We then continued along the ridge in simul-style (easy rock, 5.7) until the face proper, which begins with three chossy 5.9 pitches. This deposited us below the big gray overhanging dihedral. Here was the only snow-melting possibility en route as well as a flat ledge that provided a perfect bivy opportunity. Though we were only about 30 percent (and 11 hours) into the journey at this point, we stopped, drank and ate while filling seven liters of water for the remaining mission.

The next day's breakfast pitches through the overhanging dihedral proved to be the technical crux (hard 5.11). The Czechoslovakian Route branches right above the dihedral. Our initial plan was to do some new climbing directly into another large dihedral, but many offwidth pitches thwarted our psyche, and free climbing the remainder of the Czechoslovakian route became the goal. The climbing stayed mainly in the 5.10 range with occasional 5.11 pitches; ramps, steep cracks and chimney/offwidths characterized the route. The fine weather we had enjoyed during the previous days slowly deteriorated, with the bright moonlight we had counted on never breaking the cloud's veil. Wind became our plague while climbing through the second night. Our junction with the Californian route in the morning brought respite: conditions on the other side of the southwest arête were dramatically different. Everything was verglassed yet windless. We continued above the junctions of *Supercanaleta* and the Californian routes, opting to stay on the south side in a continuous dihedral (the Californian Route's descent) rather than weather the north side. Conditions continued to deteriorate. After 25 hours' climbing beyond our bivy, the second tower, above the Czechoslovakian Route's climbing conclusion\*, became our high point. Strong wind and rime ice prevented us from traversing the final 250 meters across the north side to the summit. Even after a substantial amount of simul-climbing and short fixing, we still roped around 30 pitches (VI 5.11, 85°). Descent was made down the Californian Route, with continued descent down the west side back to the Campo Polaco bivy.

KEVIN THAW, *United Kingdom*

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\*It should be noted that this route as defined by its first ascensionists finishes on the summit. The Slovaks reached the Californian Route on one occasion and on another occasion a high point similar to Mullin's and Thaw's, and both times they returned, as they did not consider their ascent finished.