



Untouched rock of the Gruvletindane Massif, as seen from the summit of Kubbestolen. The small glacier has no name (the "Swiss Glacier" lies behind the camera). Behind the massif are many other untouched and unexplored mountains. No further information is available about them.

ČESTMÍR LUKEŠ

the northwest face (50° in one place), then along the north ridge to the left side of the top. The approach was the same as for Elvia Peak.

ČESTMÍR LUKEŠ and IRENE OEHNINGER, *Switzerland*

Holtanna, First Ascent, and Various Other Climbs. Holtanna (2650m), situated at the southernmost point of the Fenriskjeften massif in the Dronning Maud Mountains, is a huge granite spur that towers 800 meters above the ice. The first people to travel to these mountains were the Norwegians during the Antarctic summer of 1958-59. In 1996-97, another Norwegian team made the first ascents of different peaks in this area, including the famous Ulvetanna, the highest peak (2920m) of the northernmost massif.

The team for the first ascent of Holtanna was made up of five climbers and a photographer: Alain Hubert (Belgium), Ralph Dujmovits (Germany), André Georges (Switzerland), Fabrizio Zangrilli (U.S.), and Daniel Mercier and Renè Robert (France). Also with us was Katelijne Vanheulekom (Belgium), in charge of communications with headquarters, and scientists Alain Bidart (France) and Ronald Ross (U.S.), who were working on different education and research projects.

The origin of the project goes back to 1997 when I saw these beautiful mountains from Blue-1 as I began the longest crossing ever made in Antarctica by foot and skis, using power sails. Because polar regions are central for research on climate change, I have always tried my best, through the concept of "learning by adventure," to use expeditions to make these isolat-



The South Pillar of Holtanna, showing the line of ascent.

RENÉ ROBERT

ed parts of the planet better known. Since, according to the 1992 Madrid Protocol, the Antarctic is the only continent officially considered a zone of peace and research, I consider it of the utmost importance that polar explorers and mountaineers spread the word about environmental issues of the Antarctic. In the same line of thought, we had the chance to participate in an indirect way on the study of manned flights to Mars.

NASA has been studying for years the extreme life conditions astronauts will have to face by landing on the Red Planet. Polar regions are the best places on Earth to find extremely difficult life conditions. Thus, in collaboration with Stanford University, we set up permanent weather stations and also gathered some of the few living organisms able to develop in such a harsh environment: lichens.

The expedition started from Blue-1 on December 10 by skiing for 70 kilometers to Base Camp, which was established at the bottom of Holtanna's wall. A first attempt on the north pillar was called off due to the high risk of rockfall. We then decided to climb the South Pillar (ED/ABO, 6b A2-A3) of Holtanna (The Hollow Tooth). It

took us a total of ten days to reach the summit, which we achieved during the night of the December 31, 2000-January 1, 2001. In general, the granite is very sharp (be careful with the rope) and fragile on the surface. We used bolts for most of the belays and a total of five bolts on the pitches. We used only one camp on the ascent. All of us reached the summit together on the same day.

During January, André Georges and I climbed nine other new routes in the Fenriskjeften massif around Base Camp. Some of the peaks had been named by the Norwegians in the 1960s or in 1996; we didn't want to name most of the other peaks, as Antarctica is a particular place on Earth, a place in which, ultimately, we are nothing, no more than a snow flake dependent on the wind.

The Norwegian climber Ivar Tollefsen, who led the first climbing expedition to this area, spoke about these peaks in these terms: "While crossing the back of the throat of the Fenris Wolf, we could see the tip of his blood-red tongue, pointing skyward, tinted by the midnight sun. On either side of the tongue was a set of teeth that would make the monsters in Jurassic Park look like gnats...." Beginning from the southwest point of the cirque of the Fenriskjeften massif, we climbed the first Wolf's Tooth (2210m), an incredible peak (literally carved by the wind) via a long ridge from the east to the west (TD A1) in 12 hours. Our second climb was the east face of the castle called Midgard (2345m); it took 19 hours over two days (TD A1/A2/A4). Our third and fourth teeth, a 2380-meter and a 2390-meter peak, took five hours each (D+), by the east ridge and the north ridge respectively. The fifth climb, of the east face of a 2430-meter peak, was more difficult, but the rock was beautiful and very strong, with amazing cracks. We called this peak "The Black Tooth" because of the color of the rock; the

ascent (TD) took us ten hours.

Our next objective had been climbed by Daniel Mercier and me the year before during a reconnaissance; the climb (D) took two and a half hours. We then made the second ascent of a peak named Philiptanna (2200m) by the Norwegian expedition. The climb (AD) was easy, and took one and a half hours. Next, we climbed a really amazing small peak in two pitches by the east face (D, three hours); the 400-meter west wall (full of Arctic Stern birds), which literally overhangs the ice, is impressive and gives you a nice view of the northernmost small peak of the Fenriskjefte, the Tungepissen (2277m), which we reached just for pleasure. When I left BC, Andre Georges soloed the southernmost chimney/crack (ED+) of Ulvetanna in about five hours.

Georges and I also made the first ascent and traverse (from the south to the north) of Stettind (2558m), both of us solo: D+ in eight hours on snow/ice and rock. We made the first ascent of the east ridge and the first traverse of Kintanna (2724m) by descending the north face; the peak was first climbed by the Norwegians in 1996. Our ascent and traverse (TD A1) took us 15 hours. Rapelling the face, we used the anchors left by the Norwegians five years before. All five climbers of our expedition also made the second ascent of the south face of the north peak (D+) of Holtanna (called Holstind [2577m] by the Norwegians in 1996), in four hours.

ALAIN HUBERT, *Belgium*

Dronning Maud Land, Various Ascents. Mikel Zabalaza, Ferrán Latorre and I spent a month on the Fenristunga Glacier at the base of Ulvetanna in Queen Maud Land. We flew in from Cape Town to Blue-1 on January 6 and landed in Base Camp on January 8, at about 2000 meters and half an hour away from Alain Hubert's base camp (see above). First we attempted a new route on the west face of Holtanna South, but after 12 pitches we ran into very compact rock, which would force highly technical climbing and slow progress. With bad rock quality and our limited time, this seemed a losing bet. Therefore, we decided to repeat the Norwegian route on the north spur of Kintanna (2721m). Mikel Zabalaza, Ferrán Latorre, and I summited on January 24.

On January 28, we climbed the west face of Stettind (2558m) and on February 5, Mikel and Ferrán completed a new route on the northeast face of Holtanna South (2650m). We also climbed Tungepissen (2277m), on the north edge of the massif, and the Mundlauga (2455m) on the south edge. We returned to Blue-1 on February 9 and arrived in Cape Town the next day with the other two expedition members, Antonio Perezgrueso and cameraman Manolo Rojo.

JOSÉ CARLOS TAMAYO, *Spain*

SENTINEL RANGE

Ellsworth Mountains

Ellsworth Mountains, Various Activity. We climbed the Vinson Massif in the Sentinel Range of the Ellsworth Mountains via a new route on the southeastern side. Our expedition took place from December 19, 2000, to January 16, 2001. Our group consisted of Liesl Clark, John