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Cuchillo Khuno, Probable New Routes on Southwest and East Faces

Bolivia, Cordillera Real, Condoriri Group

In June I guided Michael Ellis (USA) on the direct routes up Pirámide Blanca and Condoriri. At the same time I had organized a trip for two British clients, with Cecilio Daza as their guide. We shared base camps, and on the 17th, a rest day prior to Condoriri, I mentioned to Cecilio that I wanted to cache some gear at Condoriri high camp, so I could travel lighter the following day. He offered to help, and, feeling a little guilty, I suggested we use the gear to climb a mountain along the way and then deposit it at high camp. We decided to explore the southwest face of Cuchillo Khuno (ca 5,300m, 16°10'48.06"S, 68°14'51.37"W), a peak on the ridge northeast of Pico Austria.

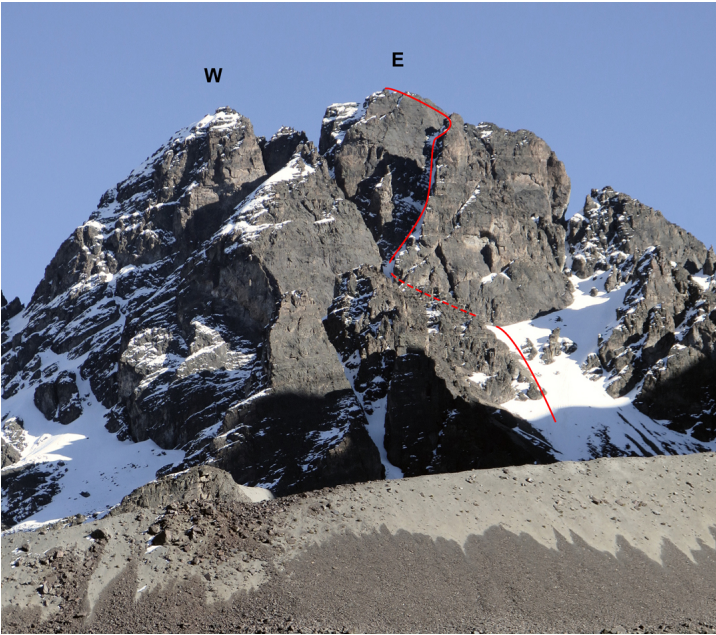
We approached the face directly from base camp, then slanted up left to the southwest ridge (between Cuchillo Khuno and Austria) to avoid sections of knee-deep snow. We followed the ridge over a little summit and rappelled to a col at the bottom of the upper southwest face. The main difficulty on the climb was a vertical rock barrier shortly above the col. After 250–300m of unroped climbing we reached the west summit and then descended the same way, as we could find no better route off the mountain. We scrambled down to the Condoriri Glacier, left the cached at high camp, and headed back to base camp on the shores of Laguna Chiarkhota via the usual route.

After climbing the Direct Route on Cabeza del Condor with Michael Ellis the following day, I wanted to return to Cuchillo Khuno, this time on the opposite side. On the 19th, Michael and I left high camp, crossed the ridge north of Cuchillo Khuno, and dropped down to the start of a gully on its east face. From here we climbed to the east summit in four 70m pitches. We then rappelled twice on the northern side of the mountain before scrambling down scree to the Condoriri Glacier and high camp.

Even though Cuchillo Khuno is located in one of the most visited mountaineering areas of Bolivia, we could find no record of these lines. More interestingly, we also did not find any cairns or other signs of previous passage on the two summits, perhaps because the area has many more attractive objectives for those visiting for their first time.

– Alexander von Ungern, *Andean Ascents*, Bolivia

Images



Cuchillo Khuno from the east, showing the (W) west and (E) east summits and the Ellis–von Ungern route to the east summit.



The upper southwest face of Cuchillo Khuno. Cecilio Daza looks for a rappel anchor that will allow access to the col at the base of the face.



Michael Ellis on the fourth and last pitch of the east face of Cuchillo Khuno.

Article Details

Author	Alexander von Ungern
Publication	AAJ
Volume	60
Issue	92
Page	0
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Climbs and expeditions