



AAC Publications

Pico 24 September, Monypenny-McGhie Route

Bolivia, Cordillera Real

LATE IN THE climbing season of 2017, Harry McGhie and I (both U.K.) headed to the east side of the Illampu massif, which appeared to have plenty of potential for new routes. We made base camp on a flattish boulder about 400m from the base of Peak 24 September. Next day we packed light for an attempt on Illampu, but as we set off for the glacier it became increasingly clear this wasn't going to happen. Harry was moving slowly, suffering from altitude and still recovering from foot surgery earlier in the year.

We decided to have a look at the unclimbed south-southeast face of Pico Emma Maria (5,531m), which looks similar to the west face of the Petit Dru in the Mont Blanc area. [Pico Emma Maria and Pico 24 are rocky eastern satellites of Illampu's Pico del Norte.] I started up the wall, climbing a hard pitch that required cleaning mossy cracks for every move. The face above steepened and I realized it was going to require a lot of time, hard climbing, and aid, including a few pendulums.

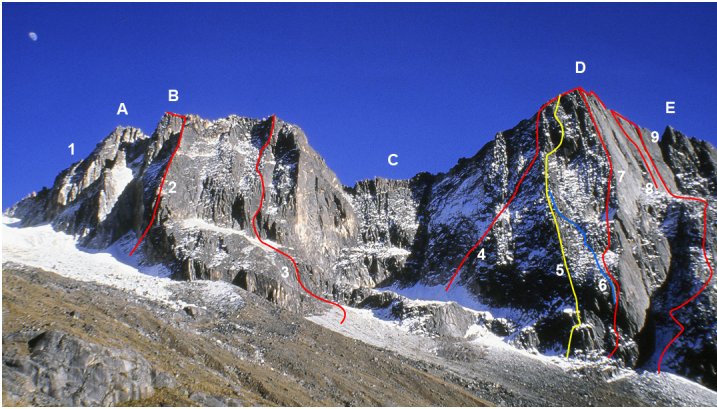
I descended and we traversed leftward, looking at other lines we might get up. The only thing that looked attractive, clean, and snow free was the probably unrepeated Humo e Independencia (500m, 11 pitches, 6c A0, Brown-Monasterio, 2004). This turned out to be a great route, like the Papillons Arête on the Aiguille du Peigne but longer and harder. We weaved around gendarmes and spires, following crack systems, and eventually topping out in good but cloudy weather. The precariously perched summit block made for a daunting final challenge. Taking a gamble in our light approach shoes (the first ascensionists rappelled the route), we traversed the main ridge to the southwest until we could make a rappel onto the glacier and descend this, with one rappel at its base.

We next tried a new route on the southeast face of Peak 24 September (a.k.a. Punta Badile, 5,432m). The steepest and most challenging part of this face is at the base, but it is also the dirtiest. Harry led the first pitch, then I took over for a steep E4 A1 pitch, that, had it been clean, would have been amazing. After this the angle eased somewhat and we picked up the pace, finding a route up cracks and arêtes in slabby terrain. After 450m we were enveloped by storm and decided to descend. [The first section of this line appears to follow the 1991 Ens-Rauch route, Don't Take the Long Way Home.]

We had enough food for one more try, so next day, rather than repeat our previous line, we chose another start farther left. The beginning of this line was also difficult, damp, dirty, and required some aid. Above, we once again were able to climb faster, though every pitch required care and holds often needed cleaning. The top third of the face, above our previous high point, steepened again and the rock became cleaner. It began to snow and became windy, but this time we were not going down. We topped out just before sunset and decided to rappel the route. A mixture of being cheap and stubborn meant that we made it down leaving only slings—as we got lower and began to run out of cord, I had to find smaller and smaller spikes to sling. We walked out the following day in a typical Andean October snowstorm.

James Monypenny, U.K.

Images



The Pico Emma Maria–Pico 24 September group from the southeast, above Laguna Negra, east of Pico del Norte in the northern Cordillera Real. (A) Eperon Maria. (B) Pico Emma Maria (5,531m). (C) The Ertl Col, reached by Hans Ertl on an early attempt at Pico 24 September. (D) Pico 24 September (a.k.a. Punta Badile, 5,432m). (E) Punta Cocoyu. (1) Southwest ridge (original route, AD+ III/IV and AI 2 60°, Ertl-Hundhammer, 1953). (2) Approximate line of the southeast buttress (Hutson Pillar, TD AI4, then 5/5+, Hutson-Mesili, 1983). (3) Humo e Independencia (500m, 11 pitches, 6c A0, Brown-Monasterio, 2004). (4) South face (450m, D+/TD- AI3 70° UIAA IV, Hutson-Mesili, 1983, first recorded ascent of the peak). (5) Monypenny-McGhie Route (ca 650m, 5.11 and some aid, 2017). (6) Incomplete line by McGhie and Monypenny (2017). (7) Don't Take the Long Way Home (ca 650m, 6b, Ens-Rauch, 1991; the climbers descended the southwest ridge to the Ertl Col, then rappelled the short south face). (8) Paititi (160m, four pitches rap-bolted from the summit, 7a, Lehmpfuhl-Rauch-Schöffel, 1998; the team approached from the far side via a new route up the west face at III+). (9) Flyvbjerg-Monasterio Route (ca 650m, 6b+, Flyvbjerg-Monasterio, 2006).

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