



AAC Publications

Gran Muralla, Northwest Face, Kamasa

Bolivia, Cordillera Quimsa Cruz

I set off from Italy with Giovanni Penna and Marco Rainone to achieve two goals: working with the Università Campesina and attempting a new route on the south face of Illimani. Università

Campesina is a project run by my friend Antonio “Topio” Zavattarelli, a priest and mountaineer who, through his missionary at Peñas, is training Bolivian high school pupils to become tour guides. The best may even progress to become mountain guides.

During the first part of our stay, we held a series of lessons with the students in the classroom and at the crags close to Peñas, after which we completed the program by climbing Chachacomani (6,074m) and Condoriri (5,648m). When the school holidays arrived, the Bolivian children returned to their families and we began considering the second stage of the expedition.

The abundant snowfall and unsettled weather in May, coupled with high winds, had created unstable conditions on the upper slopes of the mountains, and so we decided not to attempt Illimani and instead opted for the Quimsa Cruz. This area is a relatively unknown Eldorado for rock climbing, characterized by magnificent granite peaks and a huge potential for new routes.

On June 18, Marco, Topio, and I, along with three young climbers connected with the mission at Peñas—Rosmel Varillas Acuna (24), Ronaldo Choque Camargo (19), and Davide Vitale (26)—headed for the small village of Viloco. After establishing base camp at 4,500m in the Kuchu Mocoaya valley, we spent the first day making a reconnaissance and choosing an objective, eventually settling for the northwest face of Gran Muralla (a.k.a. Grosse Mauer, ca 5,100m). Rising 200–250m, this face is certainly one of the most beautiful rock formations in the cordillera.

Our climb focused on a series of cracks on the right-hand side of the face [well right of a route climbed in 2006 by two aspirant French guides]. We completed the climb in eight hours, using mostly cams and nuts, along with some pegs. The granite proved to be of excellent quality, rough and sharp, although it has to be said that the cracks were often filled with dirt, grass, and stones, which slowed progress. Unfortunately, Davide took a fall at the end of the first pitch and twisted an ankle. Topio went down with him to base camp, but the rest of us continued to the top. We rappelled the face from existing anchors on the wall to the left. [This rappel route, established in 2015 by Juvenal and Sergio Condori, generally descends along the French route from 2006 (Chabert-Labaeye), but in the decade since that first ascent, the cracks have “gone back to nature” and are choked with dirt.] We called our route Kamasa (250m, 6b A2), which means “courage” in the local Aymara language.

In both of its phases, the expedition was very positive. The Università Campesina project offers a bright future for the younger generation on the Bolivian plateau.

– Enrico Rosso, Italy

Images



Gran Muralla from the west. Routes on this formation were first climbed by a strong German party in 1987. Since then many more have been reported, though the whereabouts of several remain something of a mystery. (1) Northeast ridge (German, 1987, reported as approximately 5). (2) Northwest face, German, 1987 (reported to be 6a but may have used aid; the Condori brothers found difficulties to 6c). (3) Northwest face, German, 1987 (reported to be 6a). (4) Approximate line by unknown climbers in the mid- to late 1990s. (5) Llegada del Bourne (Rauch, 2013, 6b). Behind and to the left lies the slender pinnacle of El Obelisco de Araca (Pico Penis), and to its immediate right La Flama. In the distant right are the Cuernos del Diablo.



The northwest face of Gran Muralla. Routes on this formation were first climbed by a strong German party in 1987. Since then many more have been added, though the whereabouts of several remain something of a mystery. This topo has been produced by Sergio Condori and Bolivian mountain guides. (1) An old route established by the mid- to late 1990s, reported by Sergio Condori to be 100m, four pitches, 6a. (2) Camino de la Vaca (100m, five pitches, 6a), an upper variant to the left of the previous route, climbed in 2015 by Sergio Condori and Gustavo Lissi. (3) Chabert-Labaeye (200m, 4 pitches, 6b+). Climbed in April 2006 by two French aspirant guides, Fred Chabert and Dorian Labaeye; re-equipped for a rappel descent in 2015 by Juvenal and Sergio Condori). (4) Traditionally marked as one of the German routes from 1987 (climbed in 2015 by Juvenal and Sergio Condori, who reported the 200m, 5-pitch climb had difficulties of 6c). (5) Espiritu Vertical (200m, 7 pitches, 7a+), climbed in 2016 by Sergio Condori and Rolando Tarqui.



Routes on this formation were first climbed by a prodigious German expedition in 1987 (AAJ 1988). Since then, many more routes have been reported, though the whereabouts of several remain something of a mystery. (1) Traditionally marked as one of the German routes from 1987 (climbed in 2015 by Juvenal and Sergio Condori, who reported the 200m, 5-pitch climb had difficulties of 6c. (2) Espiritu Vertical (200m, 7 pitches, 7a+), climbed in 2016 by Sergio Condori and Rolando Tarqui. (3) German route from 1987, reported to be around 6a. (4) Chabert-Labaeye (200m, 4 pitches, 6b+, April 2006. Re-equipped for a rappel descent in 2015 by Juvenal and Sergio Condori). (5) Kamasa (6b A2, Acuna-Camargo-Rainone-Rosso, 2017; part or all of the top section may coincide with an established line. (A) Upper traverse on Kamasa. (6) Approximate line of an old route established before the mid- to late 1990s.



Choque Camargo following a pitch immediately after the upper traverse during the first ascent of Kamasa.



The northwest faces of the Gran Muralla and, to its right, the horned summit of the Cuernos del Diablo.



Enrico Rosso on the upper traverse of Kamasa on Gran Muralla.



Davide Vitale on the first pitch of the new route Kamasa on Gran Muralla, just before he took a fall and twisted his ankle.

Article Details

Author	Enrico Rosso
Publication	AAJ
Volume	60
Issue	92
Page	0
Copyright Date	2018
Article Type	Accident reports