



AAC Publications

Cerro Torre, East Face and North Face, Brothers in Arms

Argentina, Southern Patagonia

From January 25 to 27, 2022, David Bacci, Matteo Della Bordella, and Matteo “Giga” De Zaiacomo (all from Italy) climbed a 1,200-meter line up the east and north faces of Cerro Torre. The climb, which they called Brothers in Arms, was the culmination of three seasons of efforts by Della Bordella and various partners, as well as a partial conclusion to a visionary attempt made four decades earlier.

In 1978, British climbers Ben Campbell-Kelly and Brian Wyvill reached the very prominent dihedral on the right side of Cerro Torre’s east face, gaining that point by the line climbed two years earlier by John Bragg, Jim Donini, and Jay Wilson en route to the summit of Torre Egger. Climbing capsule-style from a metal and nylon box tent they hauled to the base of the corner, they climbed about 700m above the glacier. Two seasons later, Wyvill returned with Geoff Birtles, Philip Burke, and Tom Proctor, climbed back to the box that Wyvill and Campbell-Kelly had left folded in place, and continued capsule-style above. In late January 1981, Birtles and Wyvill had to head home, but Burke and Proctor pushed the route all the way up the dihedral and across the north face in a grand traverse, then up a slanting icy groove, before calling a halt less than a rope length below the Ragni Route on the west ridge. It was essentially this route the Italians aimed to complete in alpine style.

In early 2019, Della Bordella and Matteo Pasquetto climbed about 800m up the east face (about halfway up the big dihedral). In the 2019–2020 season, these two and Matteo Bernasconi returned to Patagonia for this line, but found the upper mountain encased in ice and instead climbed a new route on Aguja Standhardt. Later in 2020, Bernasconi and Pasquetto were killed in separate mountain accidents, tragedies that forced Della Bordella to seek new partners for the Cerro Torre project.

On the 25th of January 2022, Bacci, Della Bordella, and De Zaiacomo launched their attempt, starting late because the weather had not seemed promising early in the morning, and climbed 500m to the site of the “English box.” Next day they climbed the big dihedral with a mixture of free and aid, making good use of the number 7 and 8 Camalots they had carried for the corner’s wide cracks. (Burke and Proctor had brought home-made jumbo cams for their climb.) This section is very steep, and the climbing is relentless. The trio made their second bivouac in a portaledge near the top of the corner.

In the morning of the 27th, after traversing about 30m onto the north face, they encountered Tomás Aguiló and Korra Pesce, who were already well into the second day of their new route La Norte (see story here). Instead of continuing across the Burke-Proctor traverse line, the Italians followed behind Aguiló and Pesce for seven pitches to gain the west ridge. On two of the last four pitches, worried about spending too much time under precarious rime mushrooms as the day warmed, they ascended ropes trailed and then fixed by the climbers ahead of them. Once on the Ragni Route, they climbed the final rime mushroom to Cerro Torre’s summit, which they reached around 6 p.m.

Bacci, Della Bordella, and De Zaiacomo decided to bivouac on the summit and descend the Southeast Ridge in the morning, while Aguiló and Pesce rappelled their ascent route into the night. On the 28th, the three Italians touched down on the glacier in late afternoon. Here, they learned about the accident that had befallen Aguiló and Pesce at their bivouac on the north face and quickly joined the effort to rescue Aguiló, who was still 300m up the east face. Very familiar with this section of the face, and despite his fatigue, Della Bordella led the way in a group of four climbers who ascended to Aguiló to help him down.

– Information from Matteo Della Bordella and Pataclimb.com

Images



Cerro Torre from the northeast. (1) Brothers in Arms follows the 1976 Torre Egger Route and El Arca de los Vientos on the lower east face, then climbs the huge dihedral on the right side of the face before joining La Norte to the top. (2) La Norte, starting with Un Sogno Interotto (1998) and the 1976 Torre Egger route and then climbing about 550 meters of new terrain on the north face.



Aerial photo of Cerro Torre's upper north face. (1) Brothers in Arms (2022), coming up the east face and then following (2) La Norte (2022), which joins the Ragni Route to reach the summit. (3) Burke-Proctor attempt (1981), ending just below the west ridge. (4) Directa de la Mentira (2015). (5) El Arca de los Vientos (2005), joining the Ragni Route to the top.

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