

EXPAC 00/26

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EXPAC

MOUNT  
EVEREST  
FOUNDATION

REPORT TO THE MOUNT EVEREST FOUNDATION  
REFERENCE CERRO TORRE 2000

ALTHOUGH PLANNED WITH DAVID HESLEDEN (HE APPLIED FOR THE GRANT) I EVENTUALLY WENT ALONE, AS DAVID WAS STILL RECOVERING FROM AN ACCIDENT. WE HAD PUT OFF THE DATE OF DEPARTURE IN ORDER TO GIVE HIM MORE TIME, UNTIL DECIDING IT WOULD NOT BE FEASIBLE FOR HIM - HE TRANSFERRED THE FUNDS TO ME. I WAS FREE TO GO AND ABOVE ALL WELL MOTIVATED TOO AND IT WOULDNT BE THE FIRST TIME I'D SOLOED IN THAT REGION. AT THIS POINT I PERHAPS SHOULD HAVE NOTIFIED THE FOUNDATION BUT IN THE LAST MINUTE PREPARATIONS IT NEVER ENTERED MY MIND. OUR ORIGINAL IDEA HAD BEEN TO DO THE MAESTRI/EGGER ROUTE THAT MOST MYTHICAL OF CLIMBS, MY OWN THEORY WAS THAT WINTER MAY BE THE TIME TO TRY SUCH A CLIMB, HOPEFULLY WITH THE RIGHT CONDITIONS AND THE MOUNTAIN BEING SAFER TOO.

THIS ROUTE HAS BEEN ATTEMPTED OFF AND ON SINCE ITS DISPUTED ASCENT WITHOUT ANYONE COMING NEAR. I FELT IT MERITED A DIFFERENT APPROACH HENCE THE IDEA OF A WINTER ASCENT.

I DIDNT FEEL UP TO TRYING THIS ONE ALONE AND FOR A FEW YEARS HAD NURSED AN IDEA OF ASOLO ASCENT OF THE OTHER MAESTRI CLIMB ON THE TORRE THE SOUTH/ EAST RIDGE OR THE COMPRESSOR ROUTE. THIS CLIMB HAD NEVER APPEALED TO ME BEFORE AS AFTER ALL IT HAD DESECRATED THE MOUNTAIN IN MANY WAYS. STILL IF IT CAME TO IT I COULD JUSTIFY IT TO MY SELF AS A SOLO CLIMB AND IN THE WORST CONDITION - THAT OF WINTER. THIS CLIMB HAD ALREADY BEEN SOLOED BUT IN SUMMER, FIRST BY MARCO PEDRINI WHO MAY HAVE ALREADY DONE IT ROPED OR AT LEAST HAVE ATTEMPTED IT. SECONDLY IT WAS SOLOED BY ATHOL WIMP SHORTLY AFTER HE HAD CLIMBED IT WITH A PARTNER. MY OBJECTIVE WAS TO MAKE A TRUE ON SIGHT ASCENT IN FACT I DID NOT EVEN HAVE A TOPO OR ROUTE DESCRIPTION, TUSTING IN MY ABILITY AND EXPERIENCE OF PATAGONIA. OF COURSE I REALISED MY CHANCE OF SUCCEEDING WAS DRASTICALLY REDUCED BUT IT PROMISED GOOD ADVENTURE.

I FINALLY MANAGED TO ORGANISE A FLIGHT. IT WASNT EASY. I HADNT REALISED THAT SUMMER IS WHEN MOST PEOPLE TAKE THEIR HOLIDAYS AND LOOKING AT SUCH A LATE DATE MEANT THAT I COULDN'T BE CHOOSY/ ON THE 27TH OF JULY I FLEW FROM GENEVA VIA PARIS VIA NEW YORK TO BUENOS AIRES. THERE THE SAME DAY I BOUGHT A TICKET FOR THE SOUTH, TO RIO GALLEGOS. BUYING ON THE SPOT IS MUCH CHEAPER THAN GETTING A TICKET IN EUROPE. USING AIRLINES LIKE AMERICAN AIRLINES IS GOOD AS THEY HAVE MASSIVE BAGGAGE ALLOWANCES. ONCE IN RIO G. I WAS STUCK FOR THE NIGHT. CHEAP 'HOSPIDAJE' ARE AVAILABLE FOR AROUND 15 DOLLARS. A SORT OF BED AND BREAKFAST WITHOUT THE BREAKFAST. A BUS RIDE ACROSS THE PAMPA GOT ME INTO EL CALAFATE IN THE EARLY AFTERNOON. NORMALLY I ALLOW ONE NIGHT THERE, TIME TO BUY A MONTHS FOOD AND LEAVE EARLY NEXT MORNING FOR EL CHALTEN. IN WINTER THE BUS SERVICE ISNT SO REGULAR WHAT WITH THE STATE OF THE ROADS THE FEWER PASSENGERS ETC. SO I WAS STUCK AGAIN AND WENT TO STAY IN LA CUEVA - TRANSLATED THE CAVE - AND IT'S A BIT THAT. AND LIKE A BASE CAMP CABIN. RUN BY JORGE LEMOS IT'S A CHEAP CONVIVIAL PLACE TO PASS THE TIME. THE BUS SERVICE TO COUNT ON IS "CHALTEN TRAVEL" THEY AT LEAST MAINTAIN A SERVICE AND PICK YOU UP AT YOUR HOSTEL, HOTEL OR WHAT EVER. A GOOD THING WITH ABOUT A 100 KILOS OF BAGGAGE TO TOTE AROUND. I WAS THE ONLY PASSENGER TOO.

WE DASHED ACROSS THE PAMPA IN 4 OR 5 HOURS. THE ROADS HAD BEEN BLOCKED AND WERE DEEP IN WATER. THE WEATHER WAS FOUL AND CHALTEN WAS FLOODED AND HORIZONTAL RAIN - THE WORST IVE EVER SEEN, BLEW IN THROUGH CLOSED DOORS AND WINDOWS! NORMALLY I ARRIVE AND ITS GREAT WEATHER SO YOU RUSH UP TO CLIMB, HERE THERE WAS NO RUSH.

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THE FIRST THING WAS ACCOMODATION. I'D MANAGED TO DO A DEAL WITH A FRIEND, THE GUIDE ALBERTO DE CASTILLO, FOR A HOUSE. THIS PROVED TO BE A REALLY SOUND MOVE. IN SUMMER ITS EASY TO SPEND A LOT OF TIME IN BASE CAMP WHEN NOT ON THE MOUNTAIN. IN WINTER YOU NEED TO GET TO THE VALLEY AFTER ACLIMB IF ONLY TO RECOVER PROPERLY. AS WELL IT IS GOOD TO HAVE CONTACT WITH OTHER HUMAN BEINGS.

SO THE FIRST FEW DAYS WENT BY CHOPPING WOOD FOR THE STOVE, PACKING AND WHEN THE SKIES CLEARED I SET OFF WITH A FIRST LOAD TO TRY AND REACH BASE CAMP NEAR LAGUNA TORRES AND THE START OF THE TORRES GLACIER. I NEVER MADE IT TO THE CAMP BUT INSTEAD REACHED A COL AN HOUR FROM THE BRIDWELL CAMP SITE. AN HOUR IN SUMMER THAT IS IN THE SNOW, BREAKING TRAIL, I SPENT MOST OF THE DAY REACHING A PLACE WHERE I COULD STACH A SAC IN A TREE SO THAT I COULD FIND IT AND TO KEEP IT OUT OF THE WAY OF FOXES AND PUMA. AFTER THIS SNOW AND RAIN KEPT ME IN THE VALLEY UNTIL I COULD MANAGE AN OTHER TRIP UP THIS TIME I WASNT ALONE. I'D ASKED A FRIEND FREDDY SCHULZ TO GIVE A HAND I PAID HIM AS A PORTER 40 DOLLARS A DAY. IN SUMMER IT IS POSSIBLE TO HIRE A GAUCHO AND PACK HORSES TO GET THE GEAR UP TO THE CAMPS THUS SAVING A LOT OF TIME AND ENERGY. WITH FREDDY'S HELP I GOT TO BASE CAMP AND WE LEFT THE GEAR - RETREATING BACK TO THE VALLEY. SOON AFTER I WENT BACK UP TAKING A SLEDGE AND PICKING UP THE CACHE.

INSTALLED IN CAMP THE NEXT PHASE WAS TO EXPLORE THE LAKE. IN THE SUMMER ITS NECESSARY TO MAKE A BIG DETOUR AROUND THE TORRES LAKE. NOW IT WAS FROZEN AND IN 20 MINUTES ON SKIS I WAS ACROSS, THE EXIT ON TO MORAINE AND GLACIER WAS A PROBLEM AND HAD ME RELAYING LOADS, BUT AT LAST I WAS IN A POSITION TO SET OFF UP THE GLACIER. I HAD A REST DAY - THE LAST FOR A WHILE - AND THEN STARTED OUT. IT WAS COLD SO COLD IN FACT THE ICE ON THE LAKE CRACKED AND GROANED FOR MOST OF THE NIGHT AND NEXT DAY WAS PILED UP AGAINST THE FAR SHORE. A GOOD OMEN I THOUGHT? THE GLACIER WENT REASONABLY WELL, DRAGGING A SLEDGE WAS LIKE IT ALWAYS IS SOMETIMES GOOD/ SOMETIMES BAD. STILL THE ADVANTAGE IS IN MOVING A LOT OF EQUIPEMENT IN ONE GO. IT IS BRUTAL WORK THOUGH.

I FOUND A PLACE TO DIG A SNOW CAVE AT THE FOOT OF EL MOCHO A SATELLITE OF CERRO TORRE. THIS MARKED THE PLACE WHERE I COULD GO UP TO THE BASE OF THE MOUNTAIN. HAVING A CAVE MEANT THAT I HAD A GOOD PLACE TO GET BACK TO WHEN IT ALL GOES WRONG. IN THIS CAVE I'D EVEN INSTALLED A SMALL SUMMIT TENT (A MACPAC TENT). THIS WAS A LUXURY BUT IT MEANS LESS CONDENSATION AND DRIER GEAR THERE FORE MORE WARMTH AND ABILITY TO STAY OUT LONGER. WELL STOCKED WITH GAS AND FOOD IN CASE I GOT TRAPPED BY THE WEATHER, INJURED OR WHATEVER, I COULD HAVE LASTED A WHILE THERE IF I'D NEEDED TO. A GOOD NIGHT BUT A SHORT ONE. THE SKY CLEAR THE PRESSURE UP NO WIND AT ALL, NOW WAS THE TIME. THIS DAY WAS ONE OF THE HARDEST THAT I'D EVER WORKED RELAYING THE SAC THEN THE SLEDGE SOMETIMES WITH SKIS ON AND AT OTHER TIMES WITH THEM STRAPPED TO SLEDGE I ALMOST GAVE UP. AS THE SNOW WAS DEEP ENOUGH TO NEED SKIS WHEN THE GLACIER WASNT STEEP I COULDN'T LEAVE THEM, IT TOOK ME ALL DAY TO REACH THE FOOT OF THE SLOPES LEADING UP TO THE COL OF PATIENCE FROM WHERE THE REAL CLIMBING BEGINS.

IN THE BERGSCHRUND I DUG ANOTHER CAVE THINKING THAT THIS WILL BE THE LAST GOOD SHELTER. ABOVE SNOW SLOPES WEAIVED THROUGH ROCK BANDS EVENTUALLY LEADING ON TO THE COL. THE SNOW WAS BAD, I HAD TO DIG IN TO IT IN ORDER TO GET ICE AS THE STUFF COULD HAVE SLID. THERE IS AT LEAST 400 METERS OF THIS PERHAPS 500 TO THE FOOT OF THE RIDGE TO GET ON TO THE COL INVOLVED AWKWARD ROCK AND MIXED CLIMBING. ONCE AT THE BASE OF THE ROCK I WONDERED ABOUT SLEEPING IN THE SMALL SCHRUND THERE BUT ANXIUS TO GAIN HEIGHT I SET ABOUT CLIMBING.

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INITIALLY THE ROUTE STARTS WITH GROOVES THEN CRACKS AND WALLS. ALL GOOD CLIMBING, IN SUMMER POSSIBLE IN ROCK SHOES AND FAST. I FOUND ICE AND VERGLAS MOSTLY WHERE THE ANGLE EASED OFF. I WAS CLIMBING THEN HAULING THE SAC THAT I ATTACHED TO BELAYS WITH A SIMPLE FIFTI HOOK THIS MEANT THAT ONCE AT THE NEXT BELAY I SIMPLY HAD TO SET UP A HAULING SYSTEM AND REEL IN THE SAC. I WAS FREE SOLOING THAT IS OCCASIONALLY PROTECTING MY SELF WITH SLINGS OR THE ROPES I BELLED BEHIND ME. ITS A COMPROMISE ON HAVING SOME SORT OF SECURITY AND MOVING FAST. AREAL BELAY SYSTEM WOULD MEAN GOING BACK DOWN AND CLEANING THE BELAY AND THEN JUMARING UP THE PITCH WITH THE SAC ON. ALL VERY SLOW AND A LOT MORE WORK. HAULING THE BAG UP TOOK EFFORT TO. IT CAUGHT ON EVERYTHING STILL I DID A COUPLE OF PITCHES AND FIXED ANOTHER. I SLEPT ON A TINY LEDGE, THE NIGHT WAS COLD AND THE MOON WAS FULL. THIS PILLAR HAS THE ADVANTAGE OF GETTING THE EARLY SUN. I NEEDED IT. STARTING OFF AFTER A COLD NIGHT IS NEVER EASY JUMARING THE LINE WARMED ME AND WITH THE SUN FULL ON IT BECAME

PLEASANT. ABOVE A WIDE CRACK LED UP, IT WAS ALL RIMED WITH ICE AND I AVOIDED IT ON ITS RIGHT VIA A VAGUE LINE OF FLAKES. THIS SEEMED TO BE HARD AND INSECURE IM NOT SURE ITS ON ROUTE BUT AFTER A COUPLE OF HOURS I ARRIVED TO AN AREA OF SLABS AND VERGLAS. ALL ALONG IT WAS LIKE THAT. CRACKS FREE OR AID THEN AS SOON AS IT BECAME LESS STEEP ICE! AT ONE POINT I HAD A BOOT-CRAMPONS AND ALL STUCK IN A CRACK. I WAS THERE NEARLY HALF AN HOUR VERY INSECURE AND POSSIBLE TO FALL! BELOW WAS THE EAST FACE AND A BIG DROP. THIS SECOND DAY WENT LIKE THAT WITH LITTLE HEIGHT GAIN. I HACKED A LEDGE TO SLEEP ON WORRIED NOW ABOUT THE WIND INCREASING AND MY EXPOSED POSITION. CLOUDS BEGAN TO DEVELOPE THE PRESSURE FELL TOO AND I DIDNT PASS TOO GOOD A NIGHT LOOKING OUT WATCHING THE SKY I WAS UP BEFORE DAWN, ORGANISING TO LEAVE FOR THE SUMMIT SOME 400 METERS AWAY. MY <sup>PLAN</sup> HAD BEEN TO TAKE THE MINIMUM AND IN ONE PUSH TOP OUT AND DESCEND IN THE DARK. I HAD PLENTY OF BATTERIES. A RISKY BUSINESS AS IT ONLY TAKES A CAUGHT UP ROPE AND YOU ARE STUCK BUT NOW WITH THE CHANGING WEATHER IT WAS THAT OR NOTHING STILL IT WAS SO COLD I HAD TO GET BACK INTO MY SLEEPING BAG TO WARM MY LEGS. I COULD SEE THE MOUNTAIN SAN LORENZO 200 KILG-METERS TO THE NORTH AND IT WAS VISIBLY GOING UNDER THE CLOUDS. THIS REALLY SCARED ME AND COULD MEAN A BIG STORM COMING IN AND COVERING THE WHOLE REGION. TOYING WITH THE IDEA TO CONTINUE WITH THE BIVVY GEAR (AND HOPING THE WINDS DIDNT INCREASE TOO MUCH) AND TAKING A DAY LONGER-I HESITATED. IF I GOT CAUGHT HIGH UP ON THE TORRE IN WHAT I THOUGHT MAY BECOME A STRUGGLE TO GET DOWN. ALREADY IN THE SLIGHT WIND IT WAS BITTER. IF IT INCREASED? I BAILED. ON THE WAY DOWN IT SEEMED LIKE I WAS ACTING TOO CAUTIOSLY. THE WIND DROPPED THE SUN SHONE AGAIN AND I CURSED. FROM THE COL DOWN I FOLLOWED A LINE OF RECENTLY PLACED BOLTS THE SUMMER TEAMS WHO REPEATEDLY TRY THE CLIMB EQUIPED THIS. ITS QUIKER AND AVOIDS THE DODGY SNOW SLOPES I CLIMBED. I REACHED THE CAVE PICKED UP SLEDGE SKIS AND SET OFF DOWN A MORE DIRECT WAY REACHING THE LOWER CAVE AT NIGHTFALL.

IN THE NIGHT IT BEGAN TO HOWL AND IN THE LIGHT OF DAY I COULD SEE THE TOP HALF OF CERRO TORRE BEING LASHED BY WINDS AND CLOUD. LEAVING NEARLY EVERYTHING TUCKED AWAY INSIDE THE CAVE I SHOT OUT OF THERE. NO EXAGGERATION WITH A STRONG WIND AT MY BACK AND I STARTED TO WORRY ABOUT FALLING WITH THE SKIS AND HURTING MYSELF STILL I MANAGED TO REACH THE CAMP IN RECORD TIME. THAT WAS THE END OF ROUND ONE.

I HAD BEEN ON THE MOVE FOR 8 DAYS AND PRIOR TO THAT HAD BEEN BUSY JUST GETTING TO BASE CAMP AND I WAS TIRED. THE WEATHER HELPED AS IT STAYED BAD FOR THREE DAYS THEN IMPROVED SO I WENT BACK UP ON ABOUT THE 18 OF AUGUST THIS TIME WITH THE INTENTION OF DOING THE SUPERCOULOIR ON FITZROY IN VIEW OF THE AMOUNT OF SNOW AROUND I EXPECTED GOOD CONDITIONS. I HAD ACTUALLY TRIED THIS CLIMB SOLO IN 1996 IN AUTUMN SPENDING THREE MONTHS THERE AND FIGHTING FOR MY

LIFE DESCENDING IN THE WORST STORM EVER. I NEARLY DIDNT MAKE IT. ONE OF THE REASONS I PLAYED IT CAUTIUSLY ON CERRO TORRE! THE SUPER COULOIR IS 1200 METERS LONG WITH ROCK CLIMBING ABOVE ADDING AFURTHER 500 METERS TO THE TOP. ITS A BIG CLIMB AND FITZROY A WICKED MOUNTAIN IN BAD WEATHER. GETTING MORE WIND THAN THE OTHER PEAKS AROUND . ITS ALTITUDE IS 3444 METERS. FROM MY ADVANCE BASE THE SNOW CAVE IS A LONG APPROACH TO THE HEAD OF A CIRQUE . THE END OF THE WEST RIDGE OF FITZROY CALLED THE FILO DEL HOMBRE SENTADO BUTTS INTO THE SERACS OF THE CIRQUE AT THE HEAD OF THE TORRES GLACIER. WHILST CLIMBING ON CERRO TORRE I COULD SEEWAT I TOOK TO BE A COULOIR LEADING UP TO THE RIDGE AT ITS LOWEST PART. IN 1996 I FOLLOWED A RAMP MORE TOWARDS FIT ZROY THIS GAVE 800 METERS OF SNOW AND THIN ICE ON BAD ROCK. I DIDNT WANT TO DO IT AGAIN SO OPTED FOR THE NEW COULOIR. IT WENT ALLRIGHT WITH SNOW+ STEEP ICE (80°) AND AT NIGHTFALL I WAS ON THE RIDGE. SLEEPING ON ITS EAST SIDE I WAS AWOKEN BY THE SUN THE WHOLE THING SEEMED TOO GOOD TO BE TRUE I HAD THE WEATHER AND SET OFF FOR THE NORTHWEST FACE OF THE MOUNTAIN AND THE BASE OF THE SUPERCULOIR. THAT DAY I MANAGED THE FIRST 500 METERS+ BIVVIED THERE . COLD NIGHT. NEXT DAY I STARTED ON THE 80° SECTION WHICH EASED TO 60° /70°. THE COULOIR NARROWED EVEN FURTHER AND 150 METERS BELOW THE JAMMED BLOCK AND BEGINNING OF THE HARD CLIMBING THE ICE RAN OUT. FROM AFAR IT HAD LOOKED GOOD BUT TURNED OUT TO BE POWDER SNOW ON REALLY THIN ICE PERHAPS A CENTIMETER THICK. THE ANGLE NOT BEING SO STEEP I COULD BALANCE UP BUT NOT DESCEND AND HERE I WAS IN THE ZONE OF THE DIORITE ROCK VERY SMOOTH AND FRIABLE TOO. I COULDNT GET ANY GEAR IN UNTIL AFTER A 100 METERS OF SCARY JUST ABOUT IN CONTACT CLIMBING. IT WOULD HAVE BEEN EASY TO HAVE FALLEN .

AT LAST I REACHED A CRACK SYSTEM HAMMERED IN A BELAY LEFT THE SAC AND CARRIED ON BALANCING BUT EVEN WITH THE CONFIDENCE I NOW HAD IT WOULDNT GO. I MANAGED TO DOWN CLIMB AND LOOKED AT THE RETAINING WALLS BUT ONLY ON THE RIGHT WAS THERE A CRACK SYSTEM BUT I COULD NOT SEE IT WORKING. EVEN IF THERE WHERE TWO OF US IT WOULD TAKE TOO LONG, IF IT WERE POSSIBLE. I COULDNT BELIEVE. IT. PERFECT WEATHER I HAD TO RETREAT ! AT LEAST THAT WENT WELL THIS TIME THERE WERE MORE RAPPEL ANCHORS EVEN FIXED WITH CARABINERS AND I WAS DOWN A LOT FASTER THAN WHEN I WAS LAST THERE AND EVEN REACHED THE FILO DEL HOMBRE SENTADO BEFORE DARK. HERE RATHER THAN TAKE MY COULOIR OF ASCENT [PERHAPS FIVE RAPPELS] I DECIDED TO GO DOWN THE SHORTER ONE NEARER THE SERACS AND FOUND A FIXED BELAY WITH A ROPE HANGING DOWN FOR NEARLY A 100 METERS. IN TWO RAPPELS I WAS DOWN BUT A BIG CHUNK OF ROCK CAME DOWN AND CUT THE ROPES. THIS LINE IS NOT TO BE RECOMMENDED IT HAS SOME OF THE WORST ROCK IN THE WHOLE MASSIF. I EVENTUALLY REACHED THE BERGSCHRUND AND SLEPT THERE .

NEXT DAY (STILL GOOD WEATHER) I SKIED DOWN TO MY ICE CAVE LEAVING GEAR THERE AND CARRIED ON DOWN TO THE VALLEY AND EL CHALTEN. THIS WAS A MARATHON DESCENT AND I HAD BEEN OUT FOR FIVE LONG DAYS STILL THREE DAYS LATER I WENT BACK UP TO CAMP WITH AN IDEA TO TAKE MY EQUIPEMENT AND HAVE EVERYTHING AT BASE CAMP THEN DECIDE WHAT TO DO NEXT. EITHER GO FOR A LINE ON CERRO ADELIE [SOUTH] OF CERRO TORRE OR CHANGE TACK COMPLETELY AND MOVE NORTH TO PASO MARCONI AND GO ONTO THE CONTINENTAL ICE CAP AND EXPLORE A NEW ROUTE ON A POSSIBLY UNCLIMBED SUMMIT IN THE MARIANO MORENO RANGE A TRIP THAT WOULD REQUIRE PERHAPS TEN DAYS TO TWO WEEKS. IN THE END THE WIND SHIFTED TO THE SOUTH [NORMALLY A GOOD SIGN]+COLD. AN TARCTIC AIR WITH A LOT OF SNOW FALLING ALL OVER PATAGONIA. THE PROVENCE OF SANTA CRUZ A PLACE THE SIZE OF SWITZERLAND HAD EVERY ROAD BLOCKED FOR A GOOD WEEK OR MORE. I FAILED TO MAKE IT TO THE

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ICE CAVE TO SAVE MY GEAR AND FAILED TO CATCH MY PLANE SCHEDULED FOR THE 9TH OF SEPTEMBER. CHALTEN WAS CUT OFF FOR TEN DAYS AND EVEN THE TELEPHONES WENT DOWN TOO. AFTER ALL THIS IT BECAME JUST IMPOSSIBLE TO EVEN REACH BASE CAMP EVEN WHEN THE WEATHER CLEARED SO BEING STUCK IN THE VALLEY I TEAMED UP WITH LOCAL GUIDES AND CLIMBERS AND WE MADE FIRST ASCENTS OF WATERFALLS THAT WERE NOW IN CONDITION. NOTABLE CLIMBS WERE "TATTOO SUPER" HIT 5+ AND "SMOKING THE CANDLE" 6. BOTH ARE SITUATED IN THE MAIN RIO DE LAS VUELTAS VALLEY. "TATTOO" IS EAST OF THE RIVER IN THE LOS CONDORES RANGE AND "SMOKING" IS JUST NORTH OF CHORILLO DEL SALTO. THESE TWO CLIMBS AND OTHERS ARE VISIBLE FROM THE ROAD. ICE CLIMBING IS ONLY JUST BEGINNING IN PATAGONIA AND THERE ARE SO MANY AREAS TO EXPLORE.

FINALLY SNOW CONDITIONS STABILISED ENOUGH FOR ME TO GO BACK UP THE GLACIER AND PULL OUT MY GEAR FROM UNDER EL MOCHO I SLEDGED EVERYTHING TO BASE CAMP WAITED SOME MORE AND SET OUT ON A NON STOP PUSH TO DO A NEW CLIMB ON CERRO DOBLADOS EAST FACE. LESS TECHNICAL NEEDING LESS OF EVERYTHING AND TAKING JUST 5.5 MILLIMETER ROPES OF DYNEEMA, A LIGHT RACK, A STOVE AND NO BIVVY GEAR I WAS GOING TO APPROACH, CLIMB AND DESCEND IN ONE GO. THE PROBLEM TURNED OUT TO BE THE SHEAR QUANTITY OF SNOW. WITH IT STAYING COLD FOR SO LONG THE SNOW HAD NO CHANCE TO TRANSFORM [TEMPERATURES AT BASE CAMP IN THE REGION OF MINUS TWENTY OR TWENTY FIVE DEGREES CELSIUS] THE APPROACH SKI WAS JUST TOO DIFFICULT HIGHER UP THERE MAY HAVE BEEN SOME DANGER FROM AVALANCHE. ONCE AGAIN IT WAS NOT TO BE. I RETURNED TO BASE CAMP TOOK EVERYTHING DOWN ON THE SLEDGE AND WITH AN ENORMOUS RUCKSAC GOT TO WITHIN AN HOUR OF THE VALLEY BEFORE DARK, DITCHED THE SLEDGE AND RETURNED THE NEXT DAY FOR IT. I WAS FINISHED HAVING NEVER TRIED SO HARD TO ACHIEVE MY AIMS. A DAY LATER I BOARDED A BUS AND BEGAN THE LONG ROAD HOME BACK TO THE APPROACHING EUROPEAN WINTER JUST AS SPRING IN SOUTH AMERICA WAS BEGINNING.

TO SUM UP I LEARNED A LOT ON THIS TRIP. CERTAINLY IF DAVID HAD BEEN THERE WE WOULD HAVE MANAGED TO DO SOMETHING. THE COMPRESSOR ROUTE FOR INSTANCE IN TWO DAYS, THE SUPERCOLOR I DON'T KNOW BUT SOMETHING ELSE ON FITZROY, EVERYTHING IS AWAITING A FIRST WINTER ASCENT. THE WEATHER CAN BE A LOT MORE STABLE THAN IN SUMMER THOUGH THE COLD, SHORT DAYS AND ISOLATION MAY NOT BE EVERYBODY'S IDEA OF A GOOD TIME. LOGISTICALLY JUST TRANSPORTING THE GEAR AROUND IS HARD WORK THE HARDEST I'VE EVER DONE. STILL ALONE I WAS CARRYING EVERYTHING NORMALLY SHARED BY TWO CLIMBERS. THE SNOW COVER MEANS THAT SKIS ARE ESSENTIAL AND GENERALLY MAKE IT FASTER THAN SUMMER. THERE'S MORE RISK OF AVALANCHE AND GETTING CAUGHT HIGH UP IN A STORM COULD BE GRIM WITH THE LOW TEMPERATURES AND THE WINDCHILL. I CAN THINK OF SUMMER STORMS THAT I WOULDN'T HAVE SURVIVED HAD THEY BEEN IN WINTER. CONDITIONS ARE HOWEVER DRIER SO LESS RISK OF HYPOTHERMIA THROUGH GETTING WET, THEN COLD. AS CAN BE EXPECTED THERE IS AN EVER PRESENT RISK OF FREEZING FINGER ENDS ALTHOUGH IT CAN BE SURPRISINGLY WARM IN THE SUN WITHOUT THE WIND. I REAPPRAISED THE VALUE OF SOLOING FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF BEING EFFICIENT AS A MEANS OF EXPRESSION IT CAN'T BE BEAT ~~WHE~~ SOMETIMES GOING LIGHT AND FAST BUT THE GROUND I WAS TRYING TO COVER THE STYLE, THE CARRYING JUST WASN'T LOGICAL WHEN COMPARED TO THE SPEED OF TWO CLIMBERS, THE SHARING OF THE WORK AND FINALLY AT THE END OF THE DAY THE FUN YOU CAN HAVE. THIS WAS A FAIRLY AUSTERE TRIP FOR ME BUT I SURPRISED MYSELF WITH MY MOTIVATION AND COULD HAVE STAYED ON LONGER. THE FACT THAT I WAS TOTALLY ALONE IN ALL THAT VASTNESS WAS A MARVELLOUS THING TO HAVE EXPERIENCED.

TO CONCLUDE.

EXPENSES.

TRAVEL GENEVA VIA NEW YORK TO BUENOS AIRES  
BUENOS TO RIO GALLEGOS  
BUSES AND TAXIS IN EUROPE AND ARGENTINA  
TRANSFERS TO AND FROM AIRPORTS.

£1132.92

FOOD.

SOME ARTICLES SPECIALIST FOODS PROTIENS ETC. BROUGHT  
FROM EUROPE ALL OTHER ARTICLES BOUGHT IN COUNTRY.  
LESS DEMAND IN WINTER SEEMS TO PUSH UP THE PRICES.  
BEING STUCK IN EL CHALTEN AFTER THE SNOWS MEANT BUYING  
AT EXPENSIVE RATES.

£590.76

ACCOMMODATION.

HOSTELS IN RIO GALLEGOS AND EL CALAFATE GOING IN AND  
COMING OUT. COST OF HOUSE IN EL CHALTEN.

£300.00

MISCELLANEOUS.

NEW CLIMBING EQUIPMENT EXCESS BAGGAGE PORTERS  
CHARGES INCURRED DUE TO FLIGHT AND TRANSPORT  
CHARGES FATES AND TELEPHONE CALLS

£256.00

TOTAL EXPENDITURES

£2279.68