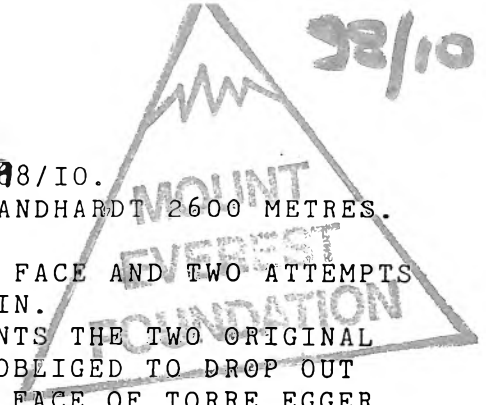


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98/10



EXPEDITION REPORT. MEF REFERENCE 98/10.
TORRE EGGER WEST FACE CHANGED TO CERRO STANDHARDT 2600 METRES.

ASCENT OF BRIDWELL/SMITH ROUTE EXOCET EAST FACE AND TWO ATTEMPTS ON THE UNCLIMBED NORTH FACE OF SAME MOUNTAIN. DUE TO FINANCIAL, FAMILY AND WORK COMMITMENTS THE TWO ORIGINAL MEMBERS F. MARSIGNY AND D. AUTHEMAN WERE OBLIGED TO DROP OUT OF THE PROPOSED TRIP TO THE UNCLIMBED WEST FACE OF TORRE EGGER 2673 METRES. THIS WOULD HAVE INVOLVED A LONG AND COMPLICATED APPROACH WHEN CHRISTOPH BEAUDOIN PROPOSED COMING ALONG. I READILY ACCEPTED AS I HAD OFTEN CLIMBED WITH HIM, THOUGH LACKING IN PATAGONIAN EXPERIENCE HE HAD MORE THAN ENOUGH ENTHOUSIASM HOW EVER I DECIDED TO WAIT UNTIL WE ARRIVED TO FINALLY CHOOSE AN OBJECTIVE. WE LEFT CHAMONIX ON THE 3RD OF MARCH FROM LYON AIRPORT THEN VIA PARIS WE FLEW TO BUENOS AIRES ARGENTINA. PRIOR TO LEAVING WE MADE THE FIRST ASCENT OF A CLIMB ON THE NORTH FACE OF THE POINT DOMINO IN CHAMONIX AS PRE PARATION. THREE DAYS WERE LOST IN B.A. AS THE AIRLINE HAD MISPLACED ONE OF OUR BAGS. WE SPENT THE TIME CLIMBING ON AN ARTIFICIAL WALL AND SHOPPING FOR A CHEAP TICKET SOUTH TO RIO GALLEGOS IN PATAGONIA. DEPENDING UPON ONES TIME OF ARRIVAL IN R. G. ONE CAN SOMETIMES LINK UP STRAIGHT AWAY WITH A BUS BOUND FOR EL CALAFATE SOME FIVE OR SIX HOURS AWAY AND NEARER THE MOUNTAINS. WE WERE LUCKY AND WITH IN TEN MINUTES WERE HEADING OUT FOR THE PAMPA AND THE WEST. FAILING THIS ONE SPENDS THE NIGHT IN RIO GALLEGOS WHERE ITS POSSIBLE TO FIND CHEAP LODGING 8/9 POUNDS A NIGHT, AS WELL THE SUPER MARKETS THERE HAVE A GREATER CHOICE OF FOOD STUFFS AND ARE SLIGHTLY CHEAPER TOO. IN EL CALAFATE WE FOUND A PLACE TO STAY AT LA CUEVA OR THE CAVE APPTLY NAMED IT RESSEMBLES A BASE CAMP CABIN ITS RELAXED AND FUN. OTHER THAN THAT THERE ARE THE YOUTH HOSTEL AND HOTELS. BUYING ENOUGH FOOD FOR A MONTH WE THEN BOUGHT A BUS TICKET FOR THE NEXT DAY TO EL CHALTEN, A VILLAGE AT THE BASE OF THE FITZROY MASSIF. AROUND SIX O'CLOCK ON THE 8TH OF MARCH SAW US HEADING WEST AGAIN AND TO WARDS THE END OF THE MORNING ARRIVING IN EL CHALTEN. ITS POSSIBLE TO PUT UP A TENT IN THE VILLAGE OR STAY IN ONE OF THE VARIOUS HOSTELS THERE IN ORDER TO GET ORGANIZED NOW WE HAD TO DECIDE WHAT TO DO. DURING THREE WEEKS IN FEBRUARY THEY HAD SEEN HOTTER WEATHER THAN AT ANY TIME BEFORE. THIS HAD BEEN FOLLOWED BY MORE RAIN THAN EVER PUTTING DOWN MASSES OF SNOW HIGH UP. THE MOUNTAINS WERE PLASTERED WITH SNOW AND THE ICE CAP DEEP IN IT SO PORTERING ALL OUR GEAR EVEN WITH SKIIS AND DRAGGING SLEDGES WOULD TAKE FOR EVER WITH JUST THE TWO OF US. I HAD HOPED TO MEET UP WITH ARGENTINIAN FRIENDS WHO MAY HAVE BEEN KEEN TO JOIN US BUT THE BAD WEATHER HAD CHASED EVERY ONE FROM THE AREA. I SUGGESTED THAT WE INSTEAD CONCENTRATE OUR EFFORTS ON THE EASILY ACCESSABLE EAST SIDE OF THE RANGE, THAT IS ON THE EASTERN FACES OF TORRE EGGER AND CERRO STAND HARDT DEPENDING ON CONDITIONS WE COULD CHOOSE ONE OF TWO ROUTES I HAD SPOTTED TWO YEARS BEFORE WHILST ON FITZROY. THIS DECIDED WE HIRED A GAUCHO AND COUPLE OF HORSES TO TAKE UP OUR GEAR TO THE CAMP AT LAGUNA TORRES OR THE BRIDWELL BASE CAMP. (DUE TO BE CHANGED TO DE AGOSTINI.) THE NEXT DAY WE SET OFF UP THE GLACIER TO WARDS CERRO TORRE. OUR LAND MARK AT HEAD OF THE GLACIER TORRES SITUATED TO THE NORTH ARE THE SUMMITS EGGER AND STANDHARDT. EIGHT HOURS OF TRAIL BREAKING IN DEEP SNOW GOT US TO THE NORWEGIAN

+523

BIVOUAC A GROUP OF SHELTERED BOULDERS ON THE EXPOSED HILLSIDE BELOW THE HANGING GLACIER AT THE FOOT OF THE EAST FACES. SNOW SLIDES AND MINOR AVALANCHES WERE POURING OFF EVERYWHERE THE MOUNTAINS WERE STILL PURGING, THE WEATHER WAS EXCELLENT. WE DECIDED TO RECHECK THE POSSIBILITIES SO NEXT DAY WE FLOUNDERED TOWARDS OUR CLIMBS, THE STATE OF THE GLACIER WAS HORRENDOUS. DEEP SNOW HAD MASSIVE HOLES AND THE BRIDGES OVER MOST OF THE CREVASSES ROTTEN AND PRECARIOUS. OUR CLIMB ON EGGERS CENTRAL COULOIR WAS A STONE SHOOT-ICE ROCKS AND SNOW RATTLED DOWN THE FULL LENGTH OF THE LINE, OVER TO THE RIGHT ON STANDHARDT THE GREAT CLEFT THAT FORMS THE BOTTOM PART OF THE ROUTE SHOT OUT RUBBLE AT REGULAR INTERVALS. TOO HOT AND DRY! WE COULDN'T DO ANYTHING! HIGH UP ON STANDHARDT'S EAST FACE GLITTERED ICE, REAL ICE, NOT SLUSH. THE ROUTE EXOCET WAS APPARENTLY IN CONDITION WE'D DO THAT THEN SEE. BAD WEATHER FORCED US DOWN AND TWO DAYS LATER WERE BACK IN OUR BIVOUAC. THE NIGHT WAS COLD, NO WIND ^{AND} THE 12 TH OF MARCH SAW US ON ROUTE **FEELING** CONFIDENT THAT WE HAD A GOOD CHANCE.

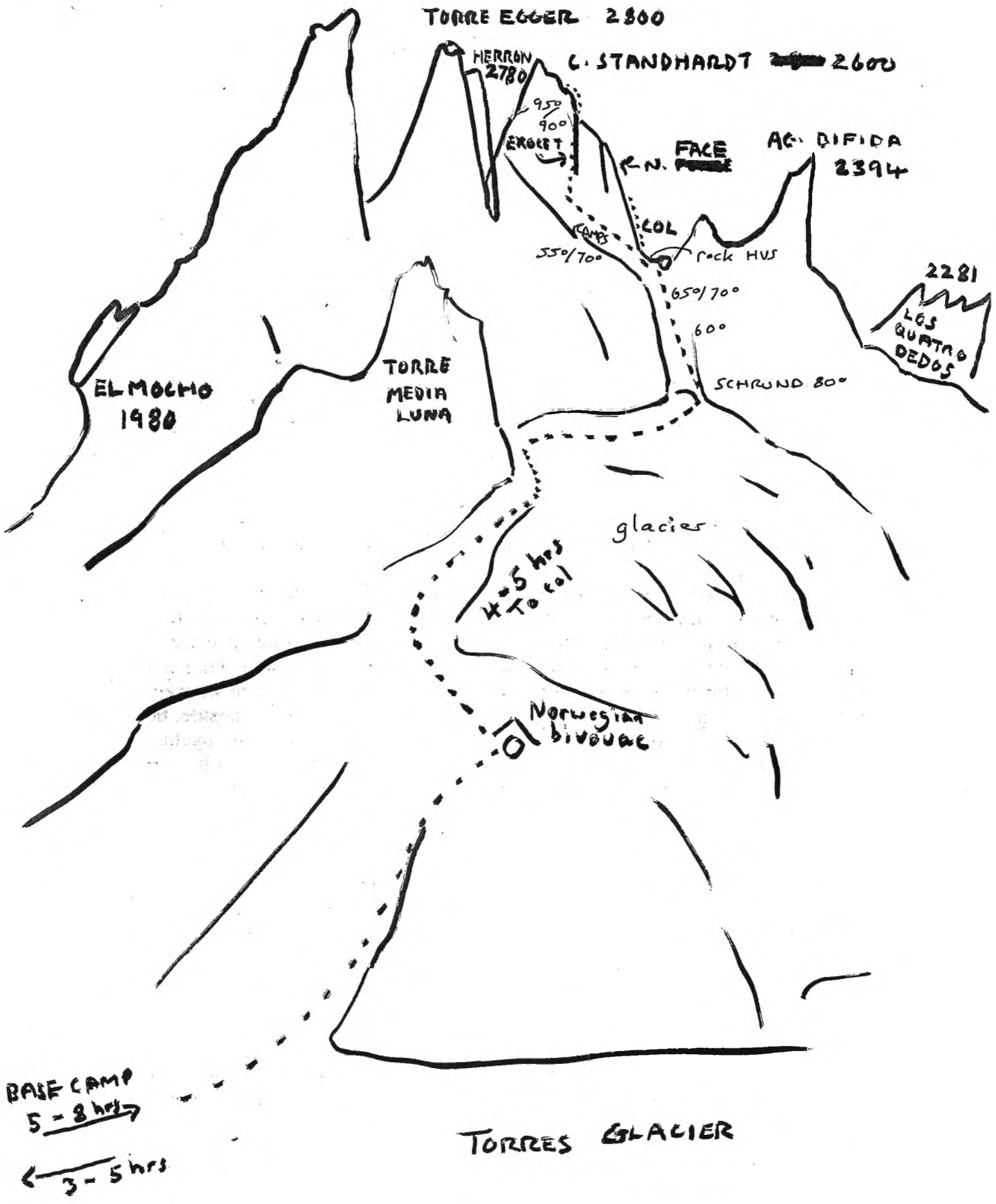
WE CARRIED BIVOUAC EQUIPMENT IN CASE THE APPROACH TOOK TOO LONG DUE TO THE CONDITIONS OR IF THE WEATHER CHANGED, WE WOULD LEAVE IT ON ROUTE. THE IDEA WAS TO CLIMB IN ONE GO WITH A LIGHT RACK FOR ROCK AND ICE TRYING TO RE-GAIN THE GLACIER FOR A LOW BIVVY. THE GOING WAS GOOD AND WE MADE RAPID PROGRESS. THE COULOIR TO THE COL WAS SIMILAR AND WE TOPPED OUT BETWEEN STANDHARDT AND BIFIDA AT THE BREAK OF DAY AS PLANNED. WE NEEDED LIGHT TO SEE THE ROCK BUT ALSO IN ORDER TO CHECK THE DESCENT TO THE WEST SIDE/THE ICE CAP. THIS HAD BEEN AN OLD IDEA THAT OF FINDING A SHORT CUT OVER TO EGGERS WEST FACE, ITS POSSIBLE BUT IN THE FACE OF SUCH DIFFICULTIES GAINING THE COL, HEAVILY LADEN, IT JUST WOULDN'T BE WORTH IT. FOR A QUICK TRIP THERE TO SEE THE PLACE, YES. FROM THE COL COMPACT SLABS LEAD TO AROUND UNDER THE EAST FACE THERE AFTER, RAMPS OF ICE AND SNOW TOOK US TO THE CHIMNEY SYSTEM THAT FORMS THE CRUX OF EXOCET. A 200 METER SECTION OF STEEP ICE CLIMBS TO THE SUMMIT RIDGE OF EASY ANGLED SNOW/ICE. AFTER ALL THE HOT WEATHER THE ICE HAD RECEDED TO GIVE VERTICAL AND OVERHANGING WATER ICE. THREE 60 METER PITCHES WERE PARTICULARLY SEVERE. WATER Poured DOWN THE CHIMNEY SOAKING THROUGH GLOVES, RUNNING DOWN OUR ARMS UNTIL WE WERE COMPLETELY SOAKED - RUNNING THE RISK OF FREEZING TO DEATH IN THE WIND ON THE RIDGE WE DIDN'T GO ON TO THE TOP. THE RAPPELS LED US BACK DOWN UNDER THE WATER FALL TO THE RAMPS, PICKING UP OUR SLEEPING GEAR WE GOT TO JUST ABOVE THE COL BEFORE SETTLING IN FOR THE NIGHT. THE NEXT MORNING IN INCREASING WINDS WE RETURNED TO THE NORWEGIAN BIVOUACS AS THE WEATHER BROKE. THIS CLIMB SHOWED US THE POTENTIAL OF THE UNCLIMBED ROCK ON STANDHARDT, IN THE PREVAILING CONDITIONS OUR BEST OPTION, SO WE SET ABOUT ORGANISING OUR GEAR FOR AN ATTEMPT ON THE NORTH FACE, NEVER EVEN ATTEMPTED AND VISIBLE ONLY FROM AGUGA BIFIDA. A FEW DAYS LATER SAW US BACK AT THE COL THOUGH IN ALREADY WORSENING WEATHER. A STRONG WIND BLEW OUT OF THE WEST AND ^{WE} SPENT TIME HACKING OUT AN ICE PLATFORM TO RE-TREAT BACK TO. THIS DONE AND THE WIND NO WORSE WE CLIMBED UP ABOVE THE COL AND OUT **TO THE** RIGHT OF THE PITCHES COMMON WITH THOSE OF EXOCET AND OF THE BRITISH ROUTE, IN FACT WE ENDED UP ON THE WEST FACE AT ONE POINT, FOLLOWING A CRACK SYSTEM WHICH PEERED OUT AND FORCED US TO CLIMB A GROOVE AT A2 TO REGAIN THE FOOT OF A FLAKE/GROOVE LINE WE HAD SEEN AND THE JUNCTION WITH THE EAST FACE. IT WAS LATE WE FIXED THE ROPES AND DESCENDED TO THE COL. IN THE NIGHT THINGS BECAME REALLY WILD A TORNADO SCREAMED ACROSS THE ICE

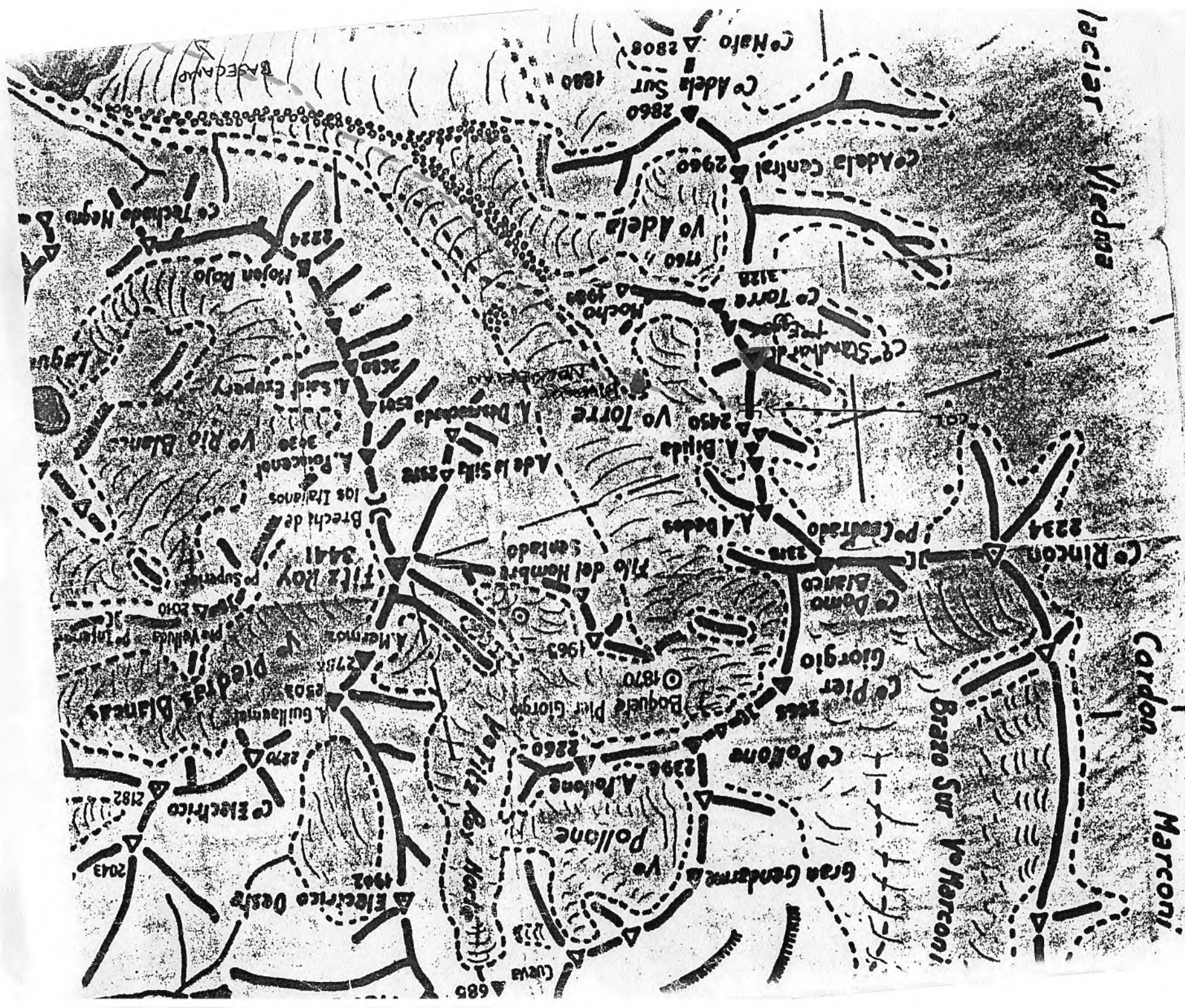
CAP TO HIT OUR MOUNTAIN WITH A FORCE I HAVE RARELY SEEN IN PATAGONIA. WE SPENT A REALLY BAD NIGHT THERE AND WITH THE NEXT MORNING HARDLY BETTER BUT GOOD ENOUGH TO JUMAR THE LINES IN ORDER TO DESCEND WHILST WE COULD . THE FEAR OF BEEING TRAPPED IS ALLWAYS OMNIPRESENT ON THESE SUMMITS AND EVERYTHING TENDS TO CHANGE RAPDLY/.

ANYWAY A FEW DAYS AFTER THE STORM THE LAST ATTEMPT WAS MADE DESPITE THE WORSENING STATE OF THE GLACIER. THIS TIME FROM ABOVE THE COL WE WOULD TRY A LINE UP AN IMPRESSIVE GROOVE/CRACK LINE BUT FROM A MORE COM FORTABLE LEDGE. WE GAINED THE FOOT OF THE STEEPWALL (WED SEEN THIS AFTER COMING DOWN FROM EXOCET) EARLY ENOUGH TO CLIMB AN A3 PITCH (NUTS, COPPERHEADS, FRIENDS AND PITONS) WITH THE IDEA OF THEN FREE CLIMBING TO BELOW THE SUMMIT MUSHROOM. WE A HAD ONE SET OF ICE GEAR FOR THIS THE SECOND COULD JUMAR. I FIXED THE ROPE AS CHRISTOPH B. GAN POINTING TO THE MASSING CLOUD, HED BEEN WATCHING THE BAROMETER DROP AND THE WINDS NOW STARTED TOS REALLY PICK UP . WE HAD A GOOD LEDGE BUT NO SHELTER SO WE CHOPPED IN TO ICE TO CREATE ADITCH TO CUT THE FORCE OF THE GALE THIS NIGHT WAS THE WORST AND WE WHERE NEARLY PICKED UP OFF THE LEDGE BY WINDS THAT WOULD UP ROOT TREES.

FOR MOST OF THE NEXT DAY WE HAD TO STAY THERE AND EVENTUALLY ESCAPED THIS TIME THE STORMS LASTED FOR TOO LONG AND FINALLY HAVING NO MORE TIME WE GAVE UP ON THE CLIMB (FOR THIS YEAR).

ALTHOUGH WE DID NOT CLIMB ANY THING WE HAD INTENDED IT WAS STILL AGOOD ACTIVE EXPEDITION. THE FIRST 15 DAYS WE DIDNT SLEEP IN THE SAME PLACE TWICE AND HAD ONLY FIVE DAYS THAT WERE REALLY BLOCKED BY BAD WEATHER, WE WERE ON THE MOVE THE WHOLE TIME. THE AREA WAS TOTALY DEVOID OF CLIMBERS WITH JUST A FEW TREKKERS AT BASE CAMP-ALL OF WHICH ADDS GREATLY TO THE SENSE OF COMITTEMENT (ITS THE REASON I GO THERE) . EL NINO SEEMED TO HAVE EFFECTED THE CLIMATE, PRIOR TO OUR ARRIVAL AND ALLSO DURING OUR STAY .ONE MONTH LATER I WAS IN ALASKA AND THE SAME THING APPLIED. FROM ONE END OF AMERICA TO THE OTHER CONDITIONS WHERE BIZARRE COMPARED TO A NORMAL YEAR.





NORTH
↓

Jaciar
Viedmas

Cardon

Marconi

Ce. Nalo Δ 2808
Ce. Adela Sur 2860

Ce. Adela Central Δ 2960

Yo Adela

Ce. Torre Δ 3128

A. Borda Δ 2450

Ade la Sila Δ 2398

Ce. Rincón Δ 2234

Ce. Domo Blanco

Ce. Pier Giorgio

Ce. Polone

Yo Polone

Gran Gendarma

BASECANTO

Ce. Tachado Negro Δ

B. Hojen Rojo

A. Sand Crapery

Yo Rio Blanco

A. Poncelet

los Italianos

Brecht de

Fitz Roy

A. Harmon

Yo Piedras Blancas

A. Guillaumont

Ce. Electrico

Ce. Electrico

2043

Electrico Desis

1902

685

Expenses

3 March 1998 To 15 April 1998

Flights £1500

Buses / Taxis / Horses

Food.

Accommodation

} £500.

£2000.

MEF Grant

£700

BMC Grant

£350

Sale of cards

£100

£1150

Upon our return there was an offer for the BMC of a further £400 but I refused as our plans had changed and the budget was no longer the same.

Obviously I know people over there so things like accommodation worked out cheaper for me than an other party with no contacts.