



pataGOnia 2005

Slovenian female expedition to Patagonia 15.1. 2005 – 10.2.2005

Tanja Grmovsek and Monika Kambic-Mali

First all women party on Cerro Torre - Short report about our climbing

Our small team from Slovenia, Monika Kambic-Mali and me, Tanja Grmovsek together with Silvo Karo and Andrej Grmovsek settled down in Campo de Agostini on 17th of January. Monika and myself started with our climbing achievements on 19th of January. We went for a long day of climbing. We started at 4am from Agostini, went past Polacos, below Ag. Saint Exupery. We tried to climb the route Kearney-Harrington, but we rappelled down after a few pitches. It was very icy, with a lot of mix climbing and we wouldn't reach the summit in the same day with our speed.

On 26th of January we went from Polacos in a pretty bad weather. We changed our plans (from Exupery) and we climbed the gully on the right side of Exupery to the col and continued to **Ag. de la 'S** (2335m) via a variant to **North Ridge** and **Austrian route** (6a, 60°, 600m). It was very windy, cold and with some rain and snow. We probably did one of the rare all female ascent on this peak. I was really happy to make it to the top, it was my first Patagonian summit.

After that we moved to Norwegos. On 31st of January we climbed to the Col de Esperanza (4hours from Norwegos). We were planning to climb **Cerro Torre** (3102m) via **Compressor route** (6a, A1+, 65°, 900m + to the Col; 5, 50°, 300m). The conditions to the Col were still OK. In the afternoon we climbed the first three pitches above the shoulder and fixed the rope. On 1st of February we started at 4am, jumared the fixed line and continued with climbing. We climbed in boots and crampons most of the time. We reached a good ledge above the first bolt traverse in the afternoon. It was too early to bivi so we continued. The weather turned and the conditions got worse from hour to hour. We kept on going because we thought that we would find a good place for a bivouac somewhere around Ice Towers. At 11 p.m. we reached a point just eight pitches below the summit. We were completely wet (there were little streams of water everywhere). The wind got really strong and cold, it was raining and very foggy. We decided to return and so we start rappelling with heavy hearts. We were so close! We had a lot of problems with our soaked ropes, which get stuck everywhere. The whole wall was just one big waterfall. We rappelled all night and mostly all next day.

The good weather kept on going. With just one full day of rest we returned to Norwegos. We decided to try again on Cerro Torre. We started on 7th of February at 3am from Norwegos with a different tactics. The lower part to the Col was ten pitches of scary climbing, because big seracs on the left side collapsed completely and it was much harder to climb. It took us seven hours to the Col. We continued in the waiting line, because there were two party of climber in front of us. We climbed to the ledge above first bolt traverse and spent a night there. The next day we climbed on. We passed our very high point from our first attempt. Monika was leading bolt pitches in the headwall when a big piece of ice from the compressor machine hit her shoulder and broke her three ribs! Monika was struggling in pain. We didn't know what to do. We decided to try for the top anyhow. Monika jumared with one hand on one of our half ropes that English climbers had fixed for her and I climbed simultaneously with her up the last pitches on just other half of the rope to the snow mushroom. In the middle of Bridwell pitch I could not reach another rivet and didn't want to fall on just one 8mm rope, so after a while I grabbed our second hanged rope and went on it for a few meters. Luckily the mushroom was not hard and **we stood on the top of Cerro Torre at 9pm on 8th of February 2005!** **We were the first all women party on the summit of Cerro Torre!** Then our hellish descent started. We needed almost one day to rappel and climb down. We rested for a few hours on the same ledge as on the way up. I did all the work and luckily Monika was able to rappel by herself. We reached Norwegos, happy to be down.

Monika commented our achievement on Cerro Torre: *"This mountain is not for women. It's a lot of hard work. I had enough this time."* And I added: *"Go women! Try it!"*

And than we started to party! After that the weather was still good so I went climbing with two young Slovenian climbers, Aljaz Tratnik and Rok Zalokar (in this January they climbed with another Slovenian Rok Sisernik, Cassaroto route– Pilar Norte, 6b, A2, 1200m on Fitz Roy). We repeated **Buscaini** (6a, 6c, 850m) on **Ag. Saint Exupery** (2558m) on 17th of February in not too nice Patagonian weather. But we did it. What an expedition!

Written by **Tanja Grmovsek, Slovenia, Maribor, 1st of March 2005**