

## Slovenian TranGO Towers 2006 climbing expedition

**\*\*\*old Men climbing team: Silvo Karo, Andrej Grmovsek \*\*\***

Many climbers said that late summer weather in Karakoram is more suitable for rock climbing and our group chose that time to visit Trango glacier and towers. We were nine: girl's party **Tina Di Batista, Tanja Grmovsek** and **Aleksandra Voglar**, "youngsters" **Matjaz Jeran** and **Matevz Kunsic**, brothers **Nejc** and **Ales Cesen** and "veterans" **Silvo Karo** and me, **Andrej Grmovsek**. We came to Islamabad on 6<sup>th</sup> of August. Flights to Skardu were impossible due to bad weather and the KKH road was also blocked by some landslides and destroyed bridges. Anyway we came by van to Skardu in three long days and continued to Trango base camp. There the changeable weather continued for most of our 25 days stay. Only three weather exceptions appeared. First, the only two totally cloudless days on 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of August, totally bad week of rain and snow at the start of September and quite stable and warmer second week of September. Weather permitted we try to climb as much as possible.

Silvo and I decided to climb rather than walk for our acclimatization. Instead of walking up and down dangerous and boring Trango gully we run across the Trango glacier to the unnamed and unclimbed peak in Uli Biaho group. On 17<sup>th</sup> of August we climbed *Warming up ridge* (V, 6b, 450m, 700m long, 6h) to its summit and named it **Uli byapjun (cca 4800m)**. We were back in base camp for dinner. After a day of rest we headed again to Uli Biaho group. We found the way to the base of unclimbed **Uli Biaho Great Spire (5594m)** on our first climb. After afternoon approach through big gully and bivouac we started at the col in early morning of 20<sup>th</sup> of August. We climbed via NE wall and S ridge to the rocky summit. The route *Three hundred eggs* (V+, 6b+, 600m, 800 long, 8h) was named after ordering more food to our cook. We were back in base camp for late dinner on that same day. Again we took only one rest day. On 23<sup>rd</sup> of August we stood on a summit of **Great Trango (6286m)** together with Sandra, Tanja and Tina. We did normal route from Nameless col in snowy and changeable weather. Our acclimatization plan was achieved and after rest we were ready but the weather was not on our side. Anyway we were cragging in walls above base camp. The best of "base climbs" was our first ascent of *Piranski zaliv* (V+, 7a obl. R, 650m, 800m long, 8h) on 31<sup>st</sup> of August in a wall above base camp, which we christened **Base camp slabs (cca. 4700m)**. All our first ascents were without bolts, we used some pitons for few rappels only. But after few days of bad weather we decided to clean filled cracks and exfoliated granite and nicer the line of *Piranski zaliv*. We added single bolt to instead unprotected slaby crux (another 7a, R, crux is still without bolt).

Our time was already running out, high summits were packed with snow from continues snowfalls but we got nice weather forecast for last few days of our staying. In such conditions a fast, one-day attempt in legendary *Eternal Flame* in **Nameless tower (6251m)** was the only possible and interesting idea for us. The route is steep, sunny and there was at least snow in it. On 8<sup>th</sup> of September at 4a.m. we started climbing from the south col. I was leading first half of the route and Silvo was jumaring harder pitches and climbing easier with a small pack we had. At 8a.m., on shoulder we met all other Slovenian parties who started day before (Sandra, Tanja and Tina headed for Eternal flame too and Matja\_ and Matev\_, Nejc and Ale\_ heading for Slovenian route). When traversing and overtaking girls party in first pitches above shoulder I used some aid, but climbed rest of my leader block free. We switched lead on small ledge on pitch 19 and were at 2p.m. already on big ledge just 6 pitches before the end of rocky wall. There the snow shower with icy wind frizzed us and stopped us for half hour. After it was over we climbed slower, mostly aiding due to cold and harder pitches. At 9p.m., already two hours climbing in moonlight we finally came 150m below summit, where snowy mix terrain begins. We thought we will be soon on summit, but there were a lot of snow and mix terrain up to M5. We were tired and with ice gear only for the first, second had to climb snow in lightweight snickers. We reached summit just a little bit before midnight. We rappelled through the night without problems and were back at the col at 4a.m. Our 24 hour roundtrip marathon remembered us on our similar marathon on Cerro Torre in year 2005 (32 hours roundtrip "Sitting start for C. Torre", 1700m). The first one was much longer, but the climb on Nameless happened on higher altitude, with a lot of free climbing and is maybe more challenging. We climbed the route at grade VI, 7b, A2, M5, 1000m. We headed home one day after.

*Written by Andrej Grmovsek, september 2006*

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### First ascents:

\*\*\**Warming up ridge, V, 6b, 450m, 700m long, Uli byapjun, cca 4800m*

FA, FFA, first ascent of the peak; 17<sup>th</sup> of August 2006; Andrej Grmovsek, Silvo Karo

\*\*\**Three hundred eggs, V+, 6b+, 600m, 850m long, Uli Biaho Great Spire, 5594m*

FA, FFA, first ascent of the mountain; 20<sup>th</sup> of August 2006; Andrej Grmovsek, Silvo Karo

\*\*\**Piranski zaliv, V+, 7a, obl., 650m, 800m long, Base camp slabs, cca 4700m*

FA, FFA; 31<sup>st</sup> of August 2006; Andrej Grmovsek, Silvo Karo

### Ascents:

\*\*\**Eternal flame, VI, 7b, A2, M5, 1000m, Trango Nameless tower, 6239m, (20h)*

20 hours of climbing from south col to the top; 8<sup>th</sup> of September 2006; Andrej Grmovsek, Silvo Karo

\*\*\**American route, ice and snow up to 80°, mainly 40°-60°, Great Trango tower, 6286 m*

23<sup>rd</sup> of August 2006; Andrej Grmovsek, Silvo Karo

\*\*\**Oceano Trango, IV, 6a/b, 250m, 300m long, Base camp slabs*

26<sup>th</sup> of August 2006; Andrej Grmovsek, Silvo Karo

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### \*\*\*Women climbing team: Tina Di Batista, Tanja Grmovsek, Aleksandra Voglar\*\*\*

Women part of the expedition was definitely the spice to mostly men climbing society in the Trango base camp. We came to Pakistan open minded, but with a lot of idea what we would like to climb. Goals for us were changing as fast as the weather in Pakistan. Our first goal, repeating in alpine style Slovak route Mystical Denmo in Haina Brakk East changed after seeing every day rock bombing of the approaching gully. Second goal, repeating in alpine style route Inshallah in Shipton spire changed after hearing report from Americans who attempted the route, that part of the route felt down above 9<sup>th</sup> pitch. Our next goal was then route in Trango (Nameless) tower, repeating the Slovenian route alpine style. After some debate with our friends that three climbing party can't be in the route at the same time we stepped out of the line and gave room to the guys that wanted to climb route free. So we opted for challenging goal for ourselves, to repeat Eternal flame in alpine style. And we stick to that plan all the way to the very top.

When we reached Trango base camp a few of us had big problems with adjusting to the uncleanliness of our kitchen, so our month of diarrhea started. Especially Tina and me (Tanja) were pretty beaten and sup up on the end of expedition. During our stay in BC we had pretty miserable weather. We were so many that entertaining were not a problem and so waiting for good weather and action up on the mountains was quite easier.

For acclimatization girls (Tina, Sandra and me) hiked up and down Trango gully two times, then we climbed **Great Trango tower (6287m)** by the *Selter-Woolum route* on the north flank (ice and snow up to 80°, mainly 40°-60°). We reached the summit on 23<sup>th</sup> of August. Between bad weather we climbed route *Karakoram Khush* (6a/b, 300m) on **Garda Peak** (cca 4700m), where we did a variation to the first pitch (6a/b, 50m). So on 26<sup>th</sup> of August we climbed the whole route free, as a first climbing party. We also repeated very nice and pleasurable route on "**Base camp slabs**", the route *Oceano Trango* (6a/b, 300m) that we prolonged for two pitches to the logical tower "Pinocchio" (5, 55m and 6-, 60m). We climbed the route on 29<sup>th</sup> of August. Then our time started to run out and the weather was bad. We had just six more days left before our departure from BC and the weather turned on our site, finally.

We decided to give it a try and climb freshly snowed *Eternal flame* (6c A2, 1000m) on **Trango Nameless Tower (6251m)** in one push, alpine style, with just the strength that was left in us after all health and food struggle. Our goal was to climb without any support, as fast as possible, and as light as possible and to make it to the summit and more important, to make it back safe and happy. We climbed as a party of three so our loads distribute between the two on the back. We took just two light sleeping bags, a stove and some bars, one ice axe and one pair of crampons. Still two backpacks felt heavy like hell higher up we went. We climbed in blocks, the heavy loaded second and third jumared. We mostly free climbed the lower part to the terrace and snowy/mix pitches on the top. The rest of the route we mostly aid climbed due to cold temperatures with some parts of obligatory free climbing in between.

We started from the south col and in three days we made the first all female ascent of Trango Nameless Tower, in alpine style. Those three days Trango turned into "Slovenian tower", because we were four Slovenian climbing party's on it, all four successful on the end. First day was not too nice weather so we pushed our minds over the edge of convenience to reach Sunny terrace (5400m). Second day we climbed to the promised big ledge (after pitch 23), where we were

shivering and squeezing in the place for one person. We didn't look at the topo and by mistake climbed Pou's variation to pitch 20&21 that was completely dry. Third day was firstly nice, but then strong and chilli wind gave movement to our bodies. We reached the top at 9 p.m. on 9<sup>th</sup> of September, shouting out what was left in us and admiring the view by the beautiful moonlight. Standing on the top more than 2000m above BC after climbing such a route with just smiling and crying girls around was really a great moment to remember. We did it!!! Inshallah. We reached terrace at 2 a.m. after finding one stick rope and loosing one. We came to big party in BC prepared by our two cooks Ali to which all climbers were invited. The same night we packed our gear, next morning porters were waiting and our farewell came. We walked for next two days and were finally able to rest after seven straight very tiring days in Skardu. What a timing we had, what luck and what a climb we did! Members happy?!

Looking back at our ascent; it was not easy, we were tired and cold, we even got some frostbites on some fingers and toes and we all had some heavy thinking moments in our heads during the climb. We always kept on going for another pitch, to see how it is. From the very beginning it was challenging, it was just a small line between going up or going down, but each of us kept silent and did her job. On the top we barely believed that we couldn't go any higher. It was hard, but it was worth it! Beautiful line - on a beautiful mountain - in the beautiful surroundings - by three beautiful girls. Inshallah.

Written by Tanja Grmovsek, september 2006

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#### **Women ascents:**

\*\*\**Eternal flame, VI, 6c, A2, M5, 1000m, **Trango Nameless tower**, 6251m (6239m) first all female ascent of the mountain, alpine style; 7- 9<sup>th</sup> of September 2006; Tina Di Batista, Tanja Grmovsek, Aleksandra Voglar*

\*\*\**American route, ice and snow up to 80°, mainly 40°-60°, **Great Trango tower**, 6286 m 23<sup>th</sup> of August 2006; Tina Di Batista, Tanja Grmovsek, Aleksandra Voglar*

\*\*\**Karakoram Khush, IV, 6a/b, 300m, **Garda peak** (4700m) we added a free variation to the start of the climb; 26<sup>th</sup> of August 2006; Tina Di Batista, Tanja Grmovsek, Aleksandra Voglar*

\*\*\**Oceano Trango, IV, 6a/b, 300m, **Base camp slabs - Pinocchio** (cca 4350m) we added two new pitches to the top of tower that we named Pinocchio; 29<sup>th</sup> of August 2006; Tina Di Batista, Tanja Grmovsek, Aleksandra Voglar*

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**Tina Di Batista** (1975) is one of the leading Slovenian female alpinist in the last few years; she has accomplished first all female ascent of Fitz Roy in 2004 and of Trango (Nameless) Tower in 2006. She has climbed many hard snow, ice and rock routes in the Alps, USA, Peru, Alaska, Chile, Argentina, Nepal... She has first ascent in Chile. In sport climbing she climbed up to 8a. She is IFMGA mountain guide.

**Tanja Grmovsek** (1976) is also one of the leading Slovenian female alpinist in the last few years; she accomplished first all female ascent of Cerro Torre in 2005 and of Trango (Nameless) Tower in 2006. She has climbed many hard rock, ice and snow routes in the Alps, USA, Peru, Mexico, China, Norway, Argentina... She has first ascents in China, Peru and in Slovenian Alps. She also competes in ice climbing WC, in mix climbing she did M9.

**Aleksandra Voglar** (1973) has climbed many hard rock routes in the Alps, USA, Mexico and Peru. She has accomplished first all women ascent of Trango (Nameless) Tower in 2006. She has first ascent in Peru. She is a mother of three years old son Matija.

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#### **\*\*\*youngsters Men climbing team\*\*\***

**climbers: Ales Cesen, Nejc Jesen, Matjaz Jeran, Matevs Kunsic**

Four members of our expedition Ales, Nejc, Matevs and Matjaz stayed in Pakistan for two more weeks and are coming back to Slovenia in the beginning of October. They will write their climbing report by themselves. You can contact them on e-mail: [m.jeran@siol.net](mailto:m.jeran@siol.net) They were also very successful, they climbed on Great Trango tower (American route), Trango Nameless tower (Slovenian route; two of them free), Little Trango tower and Trango Monk.