

Explorers Web has offered us to make a final comment to the accusations made by Pablo Besser some time ago, regarding our unsupported crossing of the Southern Patagonia Icecap in Chile last year. We have investigated a bit around Bessers expedition and there are a few new points we would like to share with the readers of Explorers Web.

We exited the icecap at Tyndall, since we considered this as the final stop of the continuous ice, because the ice actually stops here. Besser argues that the icecap stops further south and that only an exit at Balmaceda counts as a full crossing. Let's see what Rodrigo Fica, one of Bessers own expedition members, previously have said about this issue:

In the report that Rodrigo Fica sent to Desnivel Magazine on 10 February 1999 he says textually: "...At this point (Tyndall Glacier) we went to the South by the French Plateau, going over two cols. Between the first and the second we discovered that the Icecap stopped, ...We had to carry our sledges by hand about 100 meters over nunataks exposed by the retreat of the ice. After that, we went over the last col and went down to the Balmaceda Glacier."

This is most probably the same nunataks we with satellite images have proved to be the stop of the icecap, just south of Tyndall Glacier. Rodrigo Fica was a member of Pablo Bessers expedition, and at least his view on where the icecap stops is clear.

Secondly, Besser tries to compare our unsupported expedition with his supported, even if they used a depot. He says this can be compared with using a sail, which in our opinion is totally wrong.

Supported by the wind? Every one chooses their equipment, deciding what is worth to carry and depending on how well prepared and trained you are. Are sledges, skies and crampons support? GPS and communication systems also? Of course it is, because it helps you move forward more easily than without. Unsupported for such an expedition is therefore to carry with you all you need for the whole journey from start to finish without receiving anything on the way.

This is what we did. The clue is, as with all expeditions, preparations and how good you are to solve the difficulties on the way. The wind has been used as aid to move forward in Arctic and Antarctic expeditions for more than 100 years. I have never heard that Fridtjof Nansen was supported even if they used sails on their Greenland crossing in 1888.

Besser has said that they never left the ice to pick up their depot. But also here he seems to twist the truth. Apparently they had their depot stored at sea level and left the ice to get it; on 14 December 1998 they went down to the Fella Reichter and from a camp at the edge of Garcia Glacier at a height of 700 meters, during a period of 8 days until 22 December, they carried up their cache from the seashore (again from Rodrigo Fica's report to Desnivel Magazine).

If they need 8 days and 4 persons to carry up the supplies, how big was the depot? 800 Kgs at only 25 Kg per load/person/day? Apparently the depot consisted of a lot of equipment in addition to food and fuel. They got new sledges, ropes and anchors for the difficult rappel ahead and with such a strategy their expedition sounds more like two independent crossing instead of one supported crossing.

Anyway, a depot is a depot and it doesn't matter where it is stored.

We did the whole crossing without any kind of depot or re-supplies.

And one last thing we would like to comment on is the fact that we contacted Pablo Besser before our expedition, but he was not willing to share his information about the route and logistics. No wonder why on his website he wrote that he offers information to everybody except "gringos patudo" which can be translated to stupid foreigners.

Besser obviously doesn't like that foreigners do great things on "his" icecap. This and the latest information we have gathered tells us all we need to know about Pablo Besser.

As far as we concern, we have done a pure and honest unsupported crossing of the Southern Patagonia Icecap. Others can do it alone, without sails, backwards or on foot, we are still the first.

Børge Ousland
Thomas Ulrich
2004-02-16, Oslo