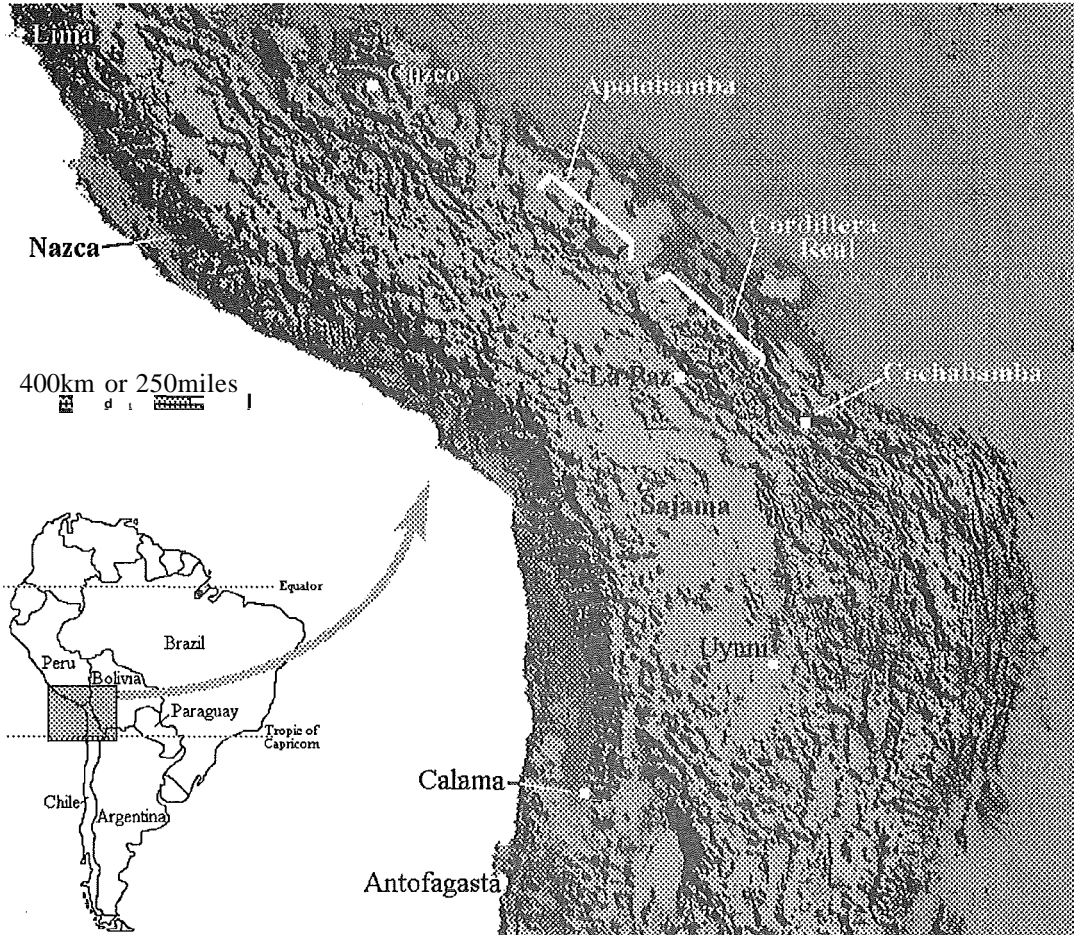




Bolivia 1999



Abstract: During June and July 1999, twelve members of the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club visited Bolivia. Following a week of acclimatisation on the altiplano, five visited the Cocapata range near Cochabamba for exploratory rock climbing on granite peaks, while the remainder completed a two-week trek in the Cordillera Real. Subsequently all combined for an ascent of Sajama. Two members then explored the Cordillera Occidental. This report includes notes on planning, routes, personal accounts and further opportunities for climbing and trekking.

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Introduction

The Yorkshire Ramblers' Club's links with Bolivian mountaineering started in 1898 when honorary member, Sir Martin Conway, made the first ascent of Illimani's highest top (6402m 21000ft) with two Swiss guides. Their local porters abandoned them on the ascent of this prominent peak which dominates the view from the city of La Paz at the southern end of the Cordillera Real (Conway, 1901, p124). Conway later almost reached the summit of Ancochuma (6427m 21086ft) at the northern end of the Cordillera Real.

Then in 1966 Tony Smythe climbed ten peaks¹, mostly first ascents, in the



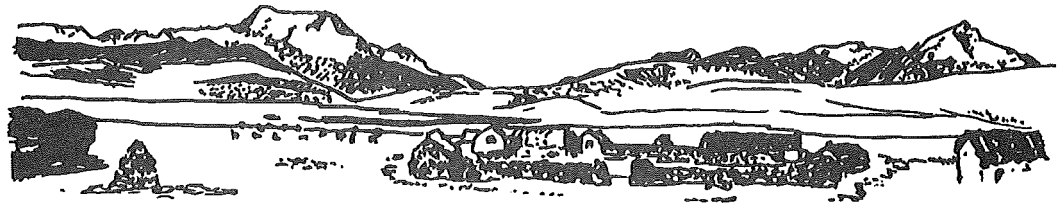
Illimani, Ruben Calderon

¹ These traditional mountaineering ascents were made more tiring by penitentes and long days out from Laguna Jacha Leche Khotabase camp. The ten ascents were:

Yoka de Ancochuma, 19,873ft, 1st ascent;
Kimsakolyo, 19,332ft, 1st ascent;
Hankopiti I, 19,249ft, 2nd ascent;
Buena Vista, 18,200ft, 1st ascent;
Viluyo 2, 18,390ft, 3rd ascent;
Taparacu, 18,867ft, 2nd ascent;
Haltatawa, 18,370ft, possible 1st ascent;
Nonte Triangulo, 18,609ft, 1st ascent;
Pico de Linea, 18,400ft, 1st ascent; and
Kunotawa, 19,622ft, 1st ascent.

Ancochuma area with one or both of Dave Challis and Bob Hall of a Bangor University team.

That trip was during a generation long lull in YRe organised mountaineering in the greater ranges. Later, the Club, after a series of well supported Alpine meets, organised a successful expedition to the Apolobamba range, north of Lake Titicaca by the Peruvian border, in 1988 (Smith, 1989). This



Apolobamba: Hunancuni & Cololo from Quello

attracted six members and created two first ascents of new routes on peaks-which had previously had few visits (Brain, 1999, p17,75). That expedition's logistical support was provided by Bernardo Guarachi who was, this year, being honoured in Bolivia by the issue of a stamp commemorating his ascent of Everest.



There followed a series of Himalayan treks and climbs over the next ten years until, by the late 1990s, groups of mostly newly retired members, with forty or so years experience, were heading out to Nepal once or twice a year.

1995 saw a YRC party of sixteen trekking and climbing in the Jugal Himal including a younger group of members. These active younger members concentrated increasingly on international caving trips over the next few years. This, and their careers, resulted in a 1998 call for members interested in another trip to Bolivia

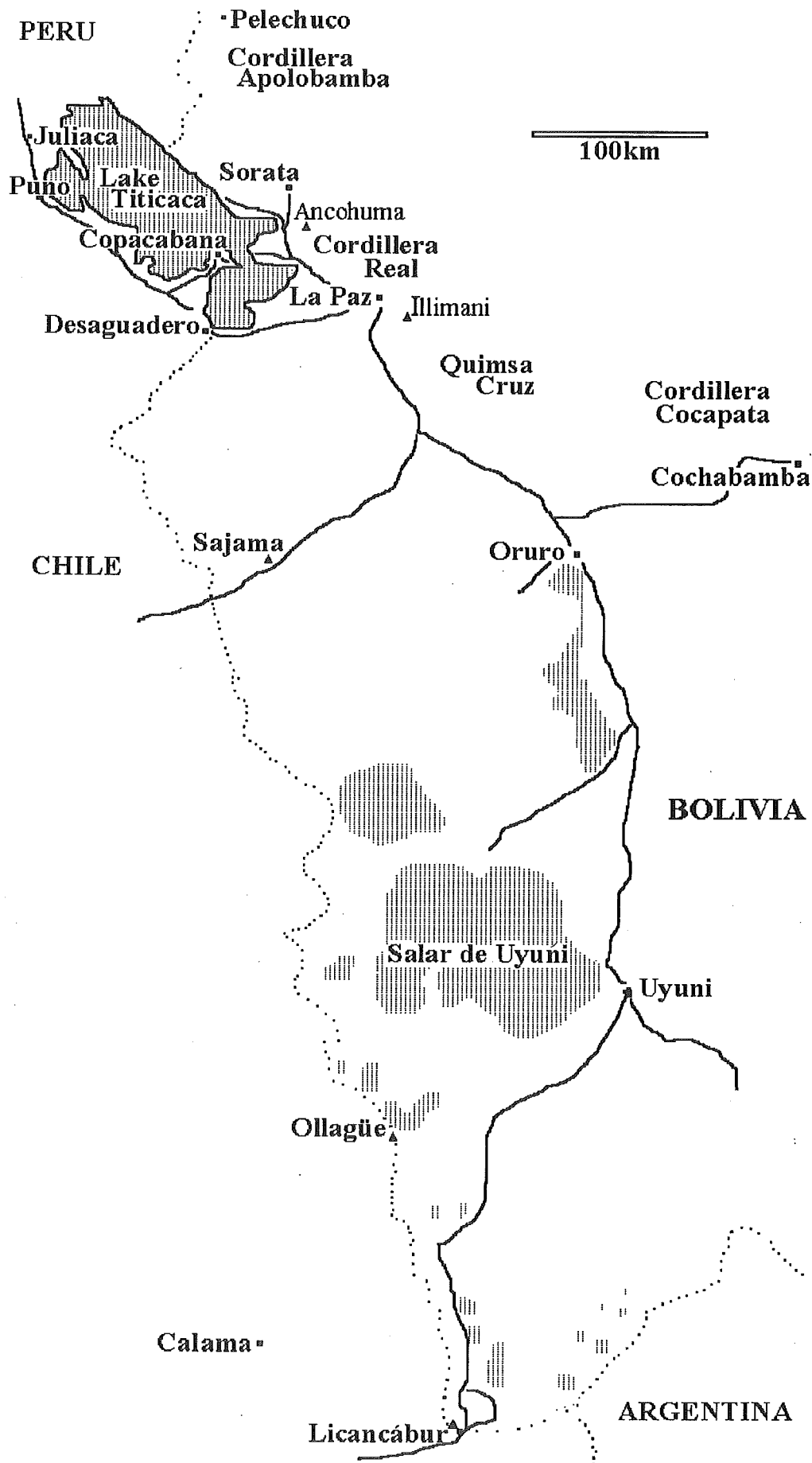
2 Cololo, 5915m / 19,406ft, west ridge route and Nevado Nubi, 5710m / 18,734ft south-west ridge.

and Chile predominantly attracting older, retired members. The vast majority of those interested wanted to spend a month, rather than six weeks, on the trip and preferred to trek without vehicle support through attractive peaks and meet up as a single group for part of the time.

Consequently the expedition itinerary was in four parts: acclimatisation; trekking in the Cordillera Real or exploratory rock climbing in the Cordillera Cocapata [Echevarria, 1997] near Cochabamba; a combined trip to Sajama; and finally, for those who remained, an exploration of the Cordillera Occidental and the Puno de Atacama. These lasted about one, two, one and two weeks respectively. The Apolobamba, Quimsa Cruz and Southern Cordillera Occidental were rejected as the main trekking and climbing as being, respectively, already visited, unlikely to bear many significant new classical routes and too remote and widely spaced.

Support was negotiated, several months in advance with the La Paz based agency, Andean Summits, with whom a suitable trekking route through the Cordillera Real was negotiated. Portering proved much more reliable than a century earlier.

Information on the Cocapata was supplied by Evelio Echevarria to supplement his article in the *Alpine Journal*.



Personnel:

Cordillera Cocapata, Climbing:

David Hick
Tim Josephy
Duncan Mackay
Rory Newman
Michael Smith

Cordillera Real, Trekking:

David Atherton
Derek Bush
Albert Chapman
Ian Crowther
Iain Gilmour
Alan Kay
Alan Linford
David Smith

Cuzco, Arequipa and Sorata

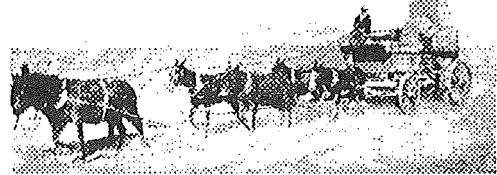
Christine Marriott

Support from Andean Summits

Jose Camarlinghi, guide
Javier Thellache, guide
Virginia (Vicky), cook
Arles, cook
Rebecca, assistant cook
Rafael Savé, driver
George, driver
Juan Carlos, driver/aspirant guide
Mario Quespe Mendosa, boatman

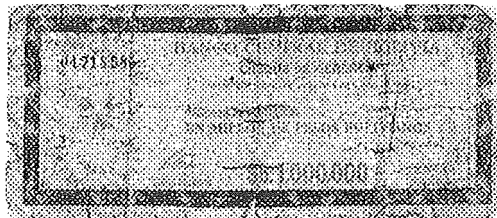
Logistics:

Flights were booked nine months in advance with American Airlines from Heathrow to Miami then Miami to La Paz. This reduced Conway's forty four day journey out from London to La Paz [Conway 1901, p69] to just twenty hours including a stroll round Miami's fashionable art deco area.



The local agent provided all trekking and base camp gear and support, local transport and food. They also booked hotels and tourist excursions for the acclimatisation period. We took out two Club Ultra Quasar tents, three MSR@Dragonfly stoves for use beyond base camp and eight climbing ropes.

Our base camps were supported by a cook and, in the case of the larger camps, an assistant. The food carried into the camp was supplemented by small amounts purchased locally as available and by a resupply after a week when the guides changed over.



Joseph Barclay Pentland (1827), a Briton who was the first person to map the Cordillera Real, was allowed £650, including £200 for books and instruments, for his eighteen month survey of Bolivia on behalf of the British government. In 1988, the Apolobamba trip cost members about £1300 including incidental costs in the field but excluding personal equipment. This time the expedition,

with its increased level of support, cost about £2000. That comprised roughly of:

- £550 air fare,
- £1200 logistical support,
- £200 on excursions and
- £50 administration and communal gear.

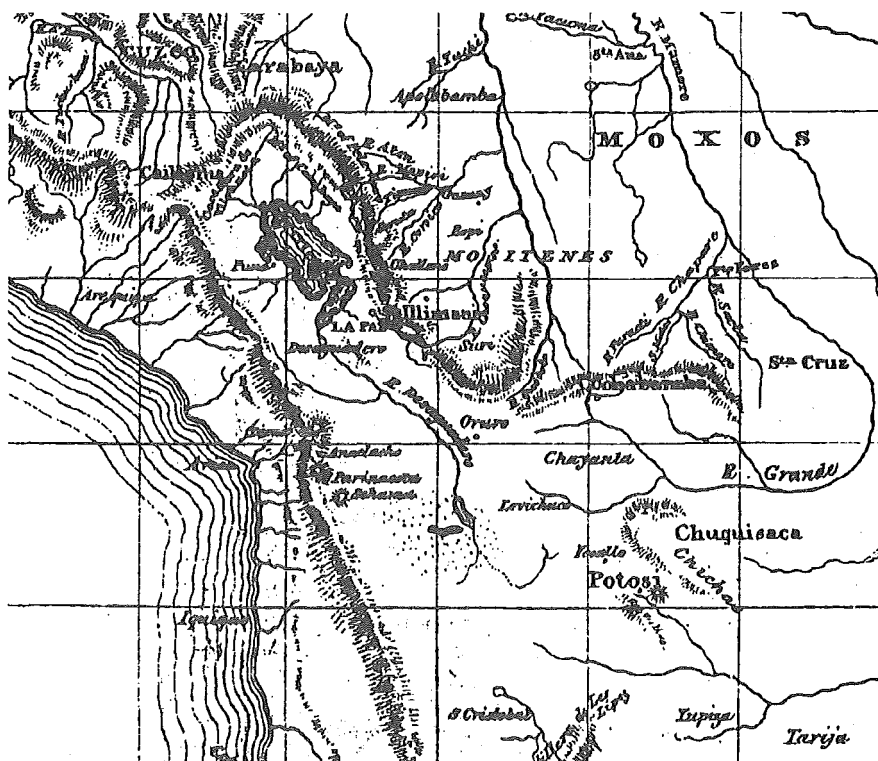
The trekking routes through the Cordillera Real are now well established and a variation, selected on the advice of the agent, was planned to provide an opportunity to ascend a peak if all was going well.

For the climbers, photographs of the Cordillera Cocapata, supplied by Echevarria, indicated that the steepest continuous rock was to be found on the west side of Jatuncasa (Cerro Jatun Khasa on the map). Consequently the largest lake in the area, Lago Calzonani, only a few kilometres away, appeared to provide a good base. This lake is a few, uphill kilometres from the nearest road and several hours steep and rough driving from the city of Cochabamba.

Since our 1988 visit the transport infrastructure and mountaineering support service had improved considerably. The publication of Yossi Brain's climbing guide, earlier this year, makes the peaks accessible to a wider range of mountaineers. Bolivia would appear to be set for an expansion of mountaineering activity.

Why Bolivia?

Invariably the first reaction of anyone told of our plans was to ask "Why Bolivia?" We saw the main advantages as abundant impressive peaks, a lack of climbers, peak fees and bureaucracy, clear blue skies almost guaranteed daily, a rich and unfamiliar culture, general stability, reasonable safety, inexpensive local support and ease of travel to the mountains. The air fare costs, sparse flora and fauna, less well known mountains and the impossibility of gradually acclimatising are significant disadvantages.



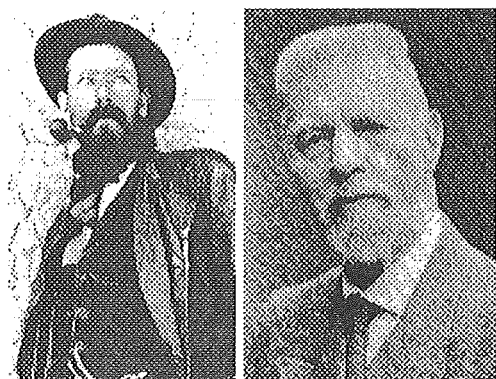
Part of one of Pentland's maps published for the Royal Geographical Society in 1835

The expedition consisted not of a single party but groups which formed at different times to visit different areas. It would be tedious to record who was where at each stage but the following outlines the main movements.

June			Day
19	Sa	Fly Heathrow - Miami - Bolivia	1
20	Su	Arrive in La Paz and remain there for orientation/recovery	2
		Titicaca sailing group (3)	
		Cuzco group (9)	
21	Mo	Puerto Perez, sail to Suriqui, camp	3
		By road to Cuzco	
22	Tu	Tiquina to camp on east shore	4
		In Cuzco visiting archaeological sites	
23	We	Isla de la Luna and Isla del Sol	5
		Visit to Machu Picchu ruins	
24	Th	Cochabamba and back to La Paz	6
		Fly from Cuzco back to La Paz	
25	Fr	Lunch with Embassy staff and	7
		Guarachi, 3 ascend Charquini	
		Cocapata Climbing group (5)	
		Cordillera Real Trekking group (7)	
26	Sa	Via Cochabamba to Tunari, camp	8
		Via Sorata to Cocoyo and camp	
27	Su	Establish Laguna Chacapata base	9
		Sarani pass to near Chajolpaya	
28	Mo	Jatuncasa, Co. Cajonani Khasa	10
		Negruni pass to Negruni lake	
29	Tu	Explore to Willipanki, Cerro Torre	11
		Rio Amawayá Jawira, Janqu Quta	
30	We	Establish Willipanki camp	12
		Quinasini Quta to near mine track	
1	July	Willipanki I, Sankhayuni	13
		Mina Fabulosa, Chiqapa Jawira	
2	Fr	Willipanki II climbed	14
		Mina Fabulosa, Chiqapa Jawira	
3	Sa	Khochá Khasa, Malpaso	15
		Cerro Nigruni corries	
4	Su	Cerro Torre, Pututuni,	16
		Co. Chiquapa pass, L. Alka Quta	
5	Mo	Jatuncasa circuit, Malpaso	17
		near Co. Wawanaki, Juri Quta	
6	Tu	Poma Apacheta	18
		near Co. Kuntui, Chiyara Quta	
7	We	Nido de Condores (Sankhayuni)	19
		Cerro Ventanani (Austria)	
8	Th	Decamp to Pefias	20
		Condoriri Glacier	
9	Fr	Sipe Sipe and on to La Paz	21
		to Tuní and La Paz	
10	Sa	Reorganising in La Paz	22
		Sajama group (9)	
		Others	
11	Su	Drive to Sajama, camp nr thennals	23
		LaPaz	
12	Mo	Establish base, 4800m	24
		La Paz	
13	Tu	high camp at col, 5800m	25
		Embassy reception with Blashford-Snell	
14	We	ascend Sajama, 6542m, to base	26
		Depart for UK	
15	Th	Decamp to near thennals, geysers	27
		Cordillera Occidental (2)	
16	Fr	Sajama village, return to La Paz	28
		Chilean Lacua National Park, Putre	
17	Sa	day in La Paz	29
		Zapahuira, Belen, Saxamar, Cuya	
18	Su	Fly La Paz, Santa Cruz to Miami	30
		Huara, Humberstone, Iquique, Pacific	
19	Mo	Heathrow	31
		Tocopilla, Calama	
20	Tu	Peru Group (2)	32
		Chuquicamata, Chiu Chiu, El Tatio	
21	We	Cuzco	33
		Geysers, San Pedro de Atacama	
22	Th	Pisac and Urumbamba	34
		near Licancabur, L. Verde, L. Colorada	
23	Fr	Visit to Machu Picchu ruins	35
		Laguna Caiiapeto Volcan Ollague	
24	Sa	fly to Arequipa	36
		ascend V. Ollagüe, Salar de Chiquana	
25	Su	Colca Cayon	37
		Salar de Uyuni, Uyuni, Isla de Pescadores	
26	Mo	Pacific Coast	38
		Tahua, Jirira, Salinas, Challapata	
27	Tu	Arequipa to Puno	39
		Poopo, Cala Cala, Oruro, La Paz	
28	We	Puno	40
		day in La Paz	
29	Th	LaPaz	41
		La Cumbre, Apacheta Chukura	
30	Fr	day in La Paz	42
		Fly La Paz, Santa Cruz to Miami	
31	Sa	Fly La Paz, Santa Cruz to Miami	43
		Heathrow	
1	Aug	Heathrow	44

Cocapata

Our attention was drawn to this area as having the "potential to be a rock climbers' playground ... 'and whoever goes there will have the whole range to himself' (Bchevarria, 1997, p158). This matched the YRC approach perfectly and the lack of previous visits by foreign mountaineers, since Hoek in 1903 and Herzog in 1908 and 1911, suggested that an exploratory climbing venture would yield new routes and peaks.



The Germans Henry Hook, 1878-1951, and Theodor Herzog, 1880-1961

Yossi Brain, outspoken as ever, commented "no snow, shite rock, why bother?" (Dec. 1997, e-mail) but we preferred to rely on first-hand accounts such as Herzog's "grey jagged ridge", "bizarely formed peaks", "steep rocky homs" and "extraordinarily impressive black tower" (1913) and Echevarria's "excellent grey granite" and "long, steep slabs of smooth rocks" (1998, correspondence).

Studying the 1:50000 maps, sent out beforehand from La Paz, confirmed the extent of the range, its relative ease of access, the steepness of the slopes and the number of peaks. While these maps depict permanent snowfields they do not now exist nor did they in Herzog's time.

The name *Cordillera de Cocapata* was used by Herzog and Echevarria in

preference to Tunari or Cochabamba and we have followed their example. The group lie north-west of Cochabamba and south-east of the Quimsa CIUZ. Peak names are problematic. Map names do not coincide with much of the current local usage. This report uses names shown on the IGM maps except for Jatun Khasa, or Herzog's Incachaca, which is referred to as Jatuncasa.

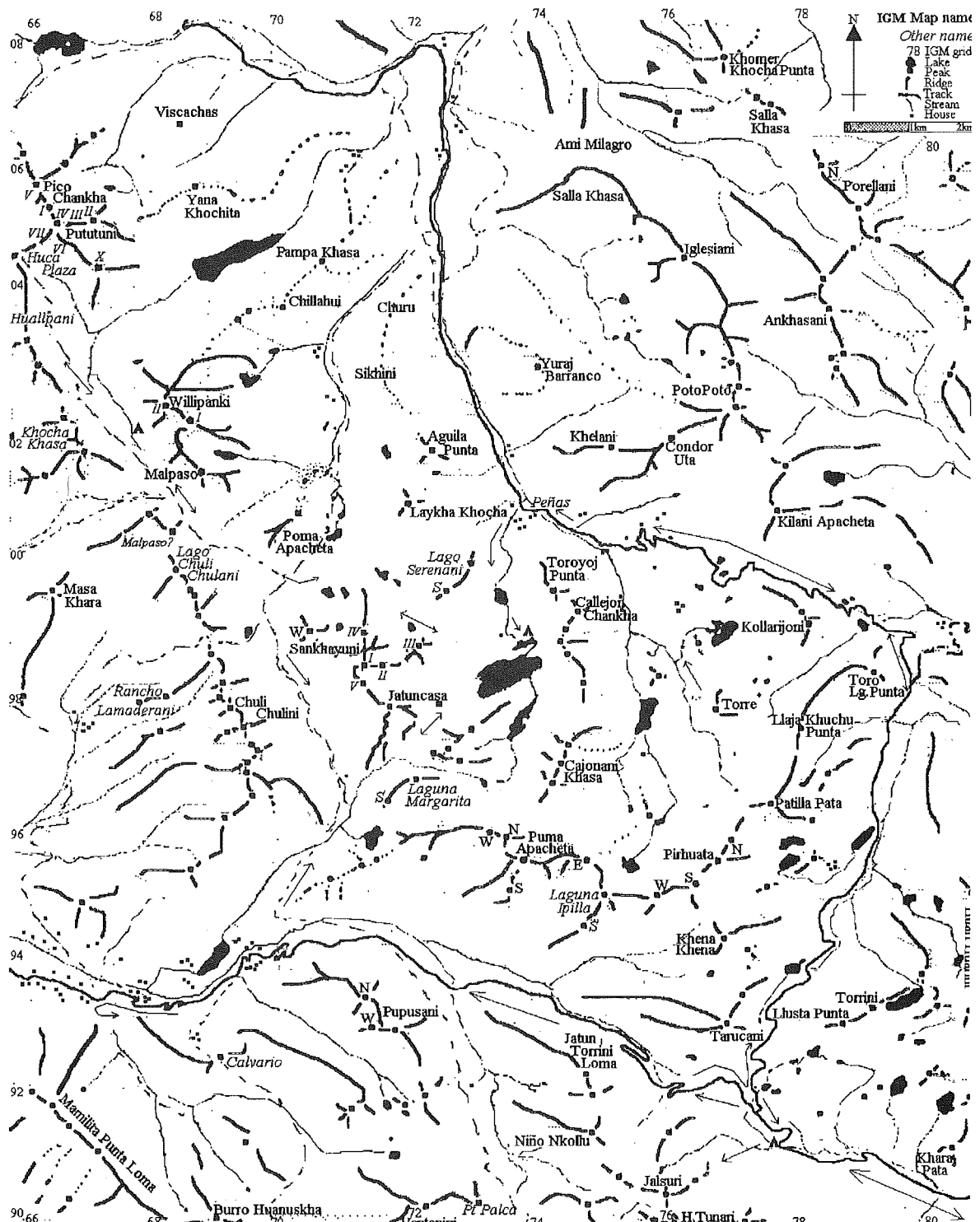
The climbers were:

David Hick
Tim Josephy
Duncan Mackay
Rory Newman
Michael Smith

Their average age was 48 years. We spent two weeks in the area during late June and early July after a week of acclimatisation. We were supported by a cook, Virginia¹, and a guide who negotiated with local people, organised the logistics and joined us on ascents. It was also the guides' first visit to the area and they knew of no other visits there apart from some viscacha hunters and mountain bikers making excursions from Cochabamba.

Our journey to the range from La Paz took a wll0le day, from 9am to sunset at 6pm, first south almost to Oruro then east over the Cordillera Oriental via the Pongo pass. Refuelling then turning north-west at the plaza in

¹ Virginia was impressive. She not only catered efficiently despite having just one paraffin stove but had, with other expeditions, climbed Illimani and Huayna Potosi (three times), and, when not employed as a cook, knits garments for sale. She spun wool at a tremendous speed. Her meals were hearty, tasty and uncomplicated. We took to searching for fossils or birds rather than arriving back at camp mid-afternoon since any early return prompted Virginia to rustle up a large bowl of salad for you, making it impossible to do justice to the evening meal.



The Cocapata based on the IGM Ed.2 Series H731 maps, sheets 6342-III and IV with grid 19 coordinates. Our basecamp was slightly north of the large lake in the middle of this map.

Quillacollo, on the outskirts of Cochabamba, initially flat fields lead into a narrow steep-sided valley rising from around 2500m to 4400m in 20km. As most of the ascent is over just 5km as the crow flies, the unsurfaced road zig zags as much as a kilometre.

Close to the Tahua Cruz road junction north of Huayna Tunari, headtorches were needed as we unpacked and erected the American designed, Taiwanese manufactured, Walrus tents and sorted out their arrangements of interlocking and criss-crossing poles.

On Sunday, June 27, we rose well before dawn for an early breakfast to give time to take the gear to Pefias at the far side of the range and leave enough time for the vehicles to be driven back to La Paz.

Tim, David and Rory were driven round to the west and dropped off at Bam, at a hut by the road, due south of Jatuncasa. They intended to cross the pass between Lagunas Margarita and Azeroni to reach, Laguna Calzonani, locate a suitable campsite and meet us at Pefias village. However, as they approached the supposed pass, the crags by the pass, viewed from below, against the rising sun, looked impassable and an alternative was found. This yomp of several miles, with full packs, clockwise round the whole Jatuncasa-Sankhayuni group meant they arrived at the camp area shortly before the first of our two, horse assisted carries up from Pefias around noon.

Meanwhile Duncan explored the ridges of Huayna Tunari. Michael and Javier had taken photographs from the south side of the range and then from the east as they had all driven round to Pefias for Ham

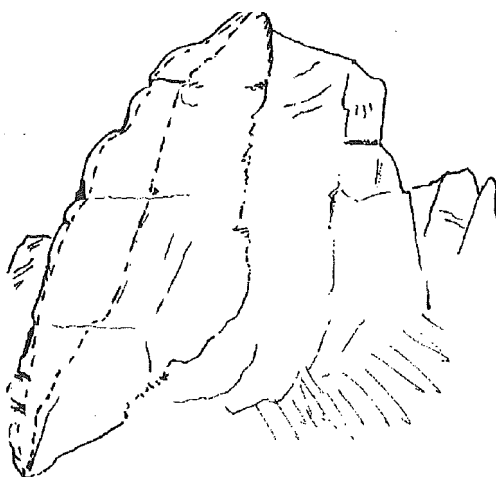
The second carry up is completed by 4pm and we establish the camp in and around a pifold by Laguna Chacapata. There is no running water and the area is grazed by alpaca. Andean geese often fed on a boggy area above or swam on the larger lake with Ruddy Duck, Caracara were frequent visitors and condors were seen daily. A lizard lived under a rock by the camp and another visitor, a vole, was only found, freshly squashed under the mess tent floor when we broke camp.



Jatuncasa

Jatuncasa's slabs looked brown, clean and warm in the morning sunlight across the lake. Just a couple of kilometres away they were an obvious first objective.

Tim and David climbed close to the left-hand edge while Javier and I took a more direct line partly along cracks. The vertical rise of the slab was measured as 300m though the 40° angle and a short ridge behind the slab's top to the true summit behind brought the climbing to 500m



Jatuncasa's 450m slab seen from the north with the two routes marked.

Even the smallest horizontal cracks in the lower half of the slab were scattered with viscacha droppings. These dog-sized rodents can scoot up much steeper rock than this at incredible speeds - they need to too, to avoid being shot.

The climbing was around VD with poor protection on infrequent shallow excavated cracks. Typically, a 45m runout would have one runner. A short descent from the top of the slab along a shattered ridge and past a tottering gendarme brought us to the summit in four hours.

There was no sign on the summit of a previous visit and no cairn on either of the two tops. Yet this was supposed

to be Herzog's Incachaca. Compare this with the description of nearby Sankhayuni (see notes below) and it is likely that these were the first ascents of Jatuncasa.

The descent looked uninviting in all directions and was a dangerously steep and loose scramble off the back and to the north, requiring three abseils in the lower part.

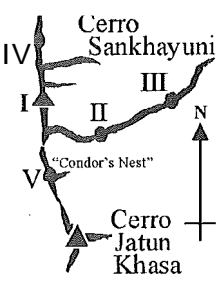
Michael was stricken with a stomach bug and, weakened, trudged slowly back to camp arriving well after dark.

Sankhayuni

Cerro Sankhayuni is a prominent group of peaks above Laguna Calzonani. Four peaks and some lesser tops enclose a complex come. A lower, fifth peak extends towards Jatuncasa, separated by a lower col. From most angles it is difficult to tell which peak is which, or to see how they relate to each other.

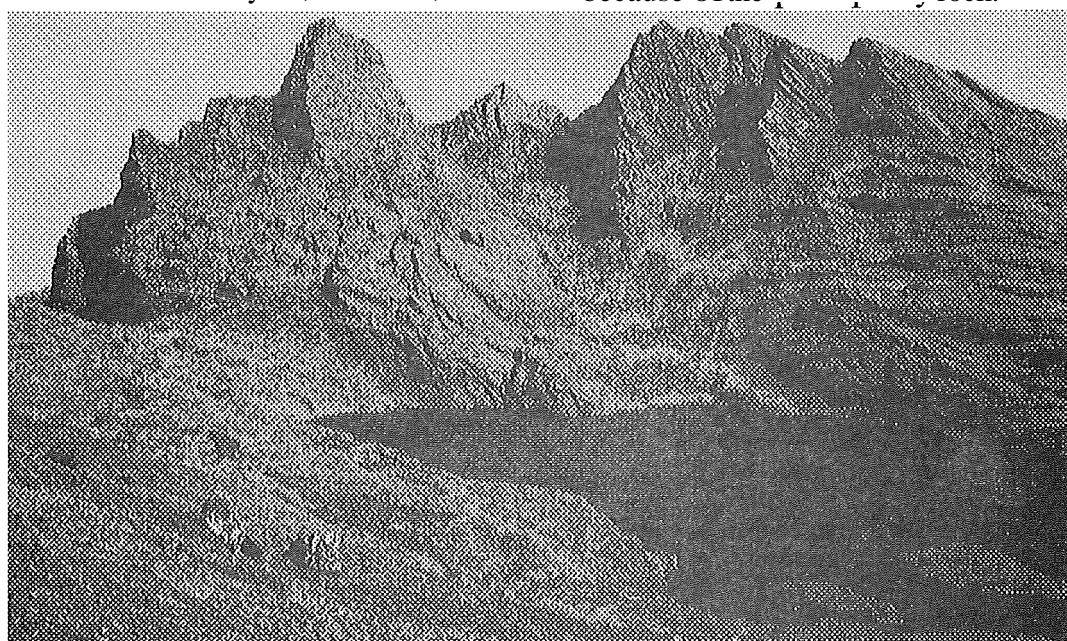
Our original information was that Jatuncasa had been climbed by Herzog but there was no sign of a previous visit and no cairn. The highest summit of Sank-hayuni, however, was

approached by Duncan and ROY on IV Ist July, via two chimney-gullies at about D-. On it was an old tumble-down cairn and Rory is convinced that this was the summit reached by Herzog, and therefore that our ascent of Jatuncasa was a first ascent.



Peaks II and V (see ridge map) of Sankhayuni were climbed by YRC parties and involved rock climbing. A first ascent of II was made by Tim and Jose in four pitches of unprotected climbing on slabs similar to those on Jatuncasa. Their descent involved three abseils down a loose couloir.

Peak IV was already cairned, and was therefore probably the other peak climbed by Herzog, Peak III was climbed by Rory and Duncan and involved a very pleasant scramble up a long section of easy-angled slabs on its north-east ridge, and a loose, shattered summit ridge. It was apparently unclimbed. A traverse of the complete ridge of Sankhayuni would be a very serious undertaking because of the rock.

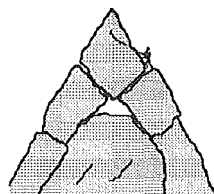


Cerro Jatuncasa, Nido de Condores (just left of centre) and the Sankhayuni peaks from the east

Nido de Condores

Condor's Nest was our fanciful name for the outlyer of Sankhayuni, top V, which, from basecamp, sat between Jatuncasa and the Sankhayuni tops.

Each morning in the first couple of



hours of sunlight the very tip of this peak glistened white.

What else could that be but the droppings round the nest or perch of some bird? What bird other than a condor would select such an exposed spot for an eyrie? The name Nido de Condores, stuck.

On July 6 the dawn sky was unusually cloudy but David, Jose, Michael and Tim walk west up the Quebrada Sankhayuni. The upper part of the valley is littered with large boulders and shadowed by the vertical, cold and forbidding southern crags of Sankhayuni. Tim, his attention attracted by swarming flies, found a boulder shelter in this area, which stank of cats and there were puma spraints, fox prints and bones pierced with teeth marks.

No sooner had the four stood under the steep slab at the foot of this peak than it began to snow. After sheltering under a boulder in increasing snowfall and a freezing wind for half an hour a retreat was made to the bottom of the high come. The weather gods were in taunting mood and the sun came out and cleared the peak of its snow as we watched. Jose and Michael slogged back up to the peak for a closer look and by heading right onto the col gained a better viewpoint.

It was clear that the intended route would have necessitated a traverse of several false saw-tooth like tops to gain the true summit. These could be

avoided by a shorter climb starting at the side of the slab and taking grooves, ledges and slabs to the crest then turning left to the true summit. Footprints crossed the col.

Returning the next day Jose, Michael and Tim climb this route in three pitches but end up on the wrong pinnacle and have to abseil back down two of them. From this unexpected vantage point they see that the summit is composed of stacked blocks and clouds passing behind can be seen through a tunnel between the huge granite blocks.

The 150m climb to the summit was made in three pitches at VD+ mostly with good stances on terraces which broke up the climbing. There were no signs of any previous ascent. The rock here was the best in the area.

Near the top our attention is caught by rockfall all around. Nothing too dramatic but stones clattering down in the distance.

As for the condor's nest, it turned out to be pale grey lichen covering a couple of metres of slab below the summit but angled to catch the morning sun,

Cerro Poma Apacheta

Cerro Poma Apacheta: the name implies that this is a suitable mountain from which to contact the Apus or mountain spirits. It is a high ridge running *WSW/ENE*, with four summits, that at the WSW end being the lowest and separated from the other three by an obvious col. The two ENE summits (joint highest) are separated from the third by a prominent overhanging gap - these two appeared unclimbed: the lower summits were cairned. There is a fairly continuous slabby buttress on the

ENE end of the ridge. Rory approached from the SE, on 6 July, in a snowstorm; this fortunately cleared as he reached the ridge via a grass/scree rake at what turned out to be the col. The WSW summit was reached via an easy scramble, the central one involved steeper rocks at about D-. An interesting traverse on snowy ledges led to a loose stone chute/gully which gave access to the gap between the two highest tops (and an even more interesting stone-fall). The tops were reached by easy scrambling, and Rory caimed them. The ridge is very loose and the flanks quite broken, but the ENE buttress seems sounder and might give decent climbing, particularly as a relatively easy descent exists.



Poma Apacheta's profile seen from the south

Cerro Malpaso

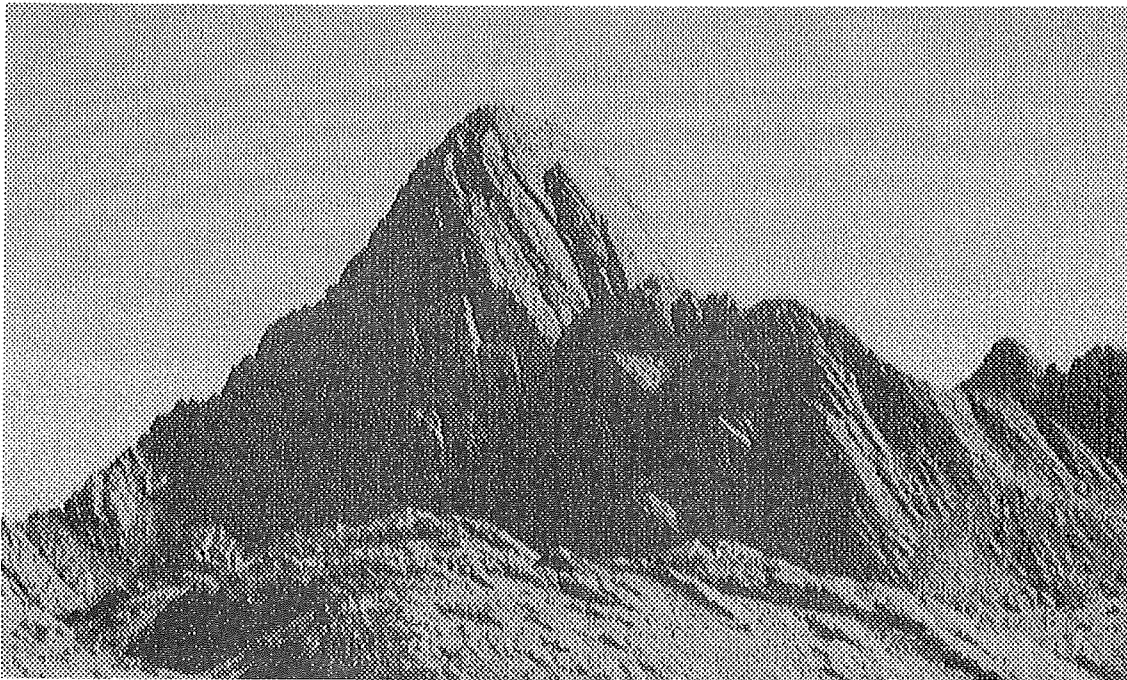
Cerro Malpaso (as it appears on the map) is a ridge south of Willpanki, separated from it by a pass accessible to llamas. The ridge runs approximately east-west with a peak at its east end near the pass, and a higher central summit. A local farmer told us that the peak is misnamed on the map. He believed this ridge to be part of the Willpanki massif, and suggested that the un-named peaks to the south-west climbed on 30 June were the real Malpaso. The east peak of the map's Malpaso was climbed by Rory and Duncan on 3rd July by a very pleasant scramble at about D- from the south-west, following an obvious gully, then a slabby ridge. The central summit was climbed, again

by Rory and Duncan, on 5th July, approaching over the llama pass, then by an ascending traverse up the north flank. A short gully led to the loose but easy summit ridge.

Pututuni

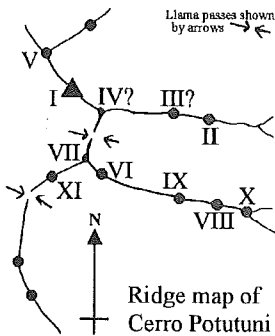
Cerro Pututuni is an extensive and complex mountain with four significant ridges, each with several distinct peaks, lying north-west of Cerro Willpanki. Two of the ridges run east-west in parallel, enclosing a steep hidden valley with a llama pass at its western head. A third, lower ridge runs south-west then south; its south-western part was not explored but looked very much like one of the rock ridges on Arran. The fourth ridge runs north-west and includes the highest peak on the mountain.

The massif was partially explored on 4th July by Duncan and Rory from a camp below the west flank of Willpanki. Unfortunately, they chose a day with extensive cloud and strong wind. This made navigation awkward, as the tops were intermittently in cloud, and the lack of sunshine meant that a lot of the rock was verglassed. They approached from the south; this flank of the mountain is made up of slabby broken buttresses separated by steep gullies. They followed an icy gully with Moderate excursions onto the buttress to its right (east). This led to the ridge west of peak IX (see ridge map). They scrambled easily up the peak, then followed the hidden valley between the parallel east/west ridges to its head. An icy Moderate scramble north led to peak IV; through breaks in the cloud we could see apparently higher peaks to east and north-west. The continuation ridge east looked very icy and awkward, so instead we made a traverse on scree to another



Cerro Willpanki I rising above Cerro Poma Apacheta seen from a pass to the south.
Tim and Javier's route was close to the left skyline of Willpanki.

gully on the south west flank of the north-west ridge. This led via an easy scramble to peak I; a convenient break in the clouds confirmed this to be the summit and enabled us to estimate relative heights for some of other peaks which are numbered on the ridge map in descending height order.



Relative heights are difficult to estimate and peaks III and IV are almost the same height. Peak V is named *Cerro Pico Chankha* on the map but is clearly

part of the Cerro Pututuni massif.

Finally, returning to the head of the hidden valley, they scrambled up peaks VI and VII at about D-. Apart from the llama pass at the head of the hidden valley no sign of human activity was seen anywhere on the mountain: all the peaks appeared to be first ascents. There is a lot of scope for interesting scrambling, with at least six more unclimbed tops. Peaks

II, III and XI all look to be fairly serious undertakings and might involve rock-climbing. Unfortunately the rock is variable in quality, often very loose.

Willpanki

Driving into the eastern Cocapata any mountaineer's eye will be caught by the red tombstone like slabs of Willpanki. A more direct approach to this peak, than the one we took, could be made by driving five kilometres further north along the Rio Peñas road then doubling back along the Rio Chakheri path. However, once we had all our gear at our base by Laguna Chacapata it was easier to take the mountain passes to the north west and camp below Willpanki by the source of the Huallpani. A single tent was occupied by three pairs of climbers in turn.

On July 1, Tim and Javier, climbed the steep but broken south-west ridge of Willpanki's southern top, starting with an approach from the south. There

were considerable amounts of poor rock and sections of the route were graded Severe. Reaching the top via slabs, it was obvious that this was clearly the higher of the two tops despite the opposite being marked on the map. There being no record of any previous ascent and no cairn on the summit, despite building on being the local habit, this was claimed as a first ascent of Willpanki I.



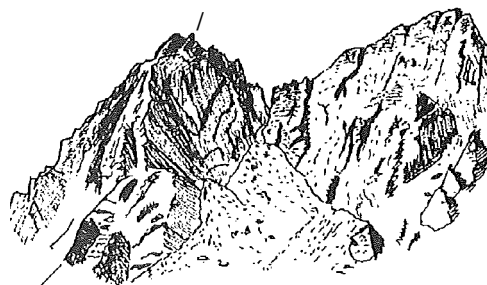
Willpanki II and I seen from Khocha Khasa to the west. The route on II is the ridge forming the right-hand edge. On I the route followed the nearer of the two ridges on the right descending the left hand skyline.

The ascent was only part of their problems though as the descent to the col between the two peaks required abseils despite the lack of suitable anchors.' A jammed rope further complicated matters. This descent of the north ridge and dropping into the couloir at the head of the come to the west, is not recommended. The return to camp was made late in the afternoon and return to basecamp completed after dark.

David and Michael, on July 2, climbed the south-west ridge of Willpanki II, the northern top. This route was about VD, 350m vertical rise and about 500m of climbing took six hours. It started at the lowest point

on the butress (4585m) and followed the rib, broken in places by scree, to an obvious tower (4865m) before traversing a narrow crest to the summit at about 4915m. Loose material in gullies was a hazard, good belays were few and short walls gave the hardest moves, some Severe. Only close to the tower was the climbing directly lit by sunlight so the rock was cold and some ledges snow covered. This is undoubtedly a first climbing ascent of the peak but there is a straightforward walking route from the north and a large, well-built cairn indicates regular ascents. That route was used in descent to reach the steep open couloir leading east and back to the camp. Both climbers were so tired after this climb that they slept straight through the long night - a rarity indeed.

The Willpanki peaks give good views over to the Quimsa Cruz and Illimani. The eastern flank is an obvious area for further climbs of higher grade.



Willpanki II and I as seen from the south with the line of the route on II marked.

Khocha Khasa

The peak under this map label was a gentle one mile walk from our Willpanki camp. It gave good views into a deep-cut valley running into the Rio Pucarani. Steep, shattered crags fell to the south. David, Rory and Michael made this ascent on July 3. David visited the summit three times in search of a dropped compact camera.

Cajonani Khasa

Two small uncaimed tops of Cerro Cajonani Khasa, but south of the map label, were climbed by Rory on 28th June. Each involved a little mild scrambling on loose rock. He suspects that these had been previously climbed by llamas if not by people.

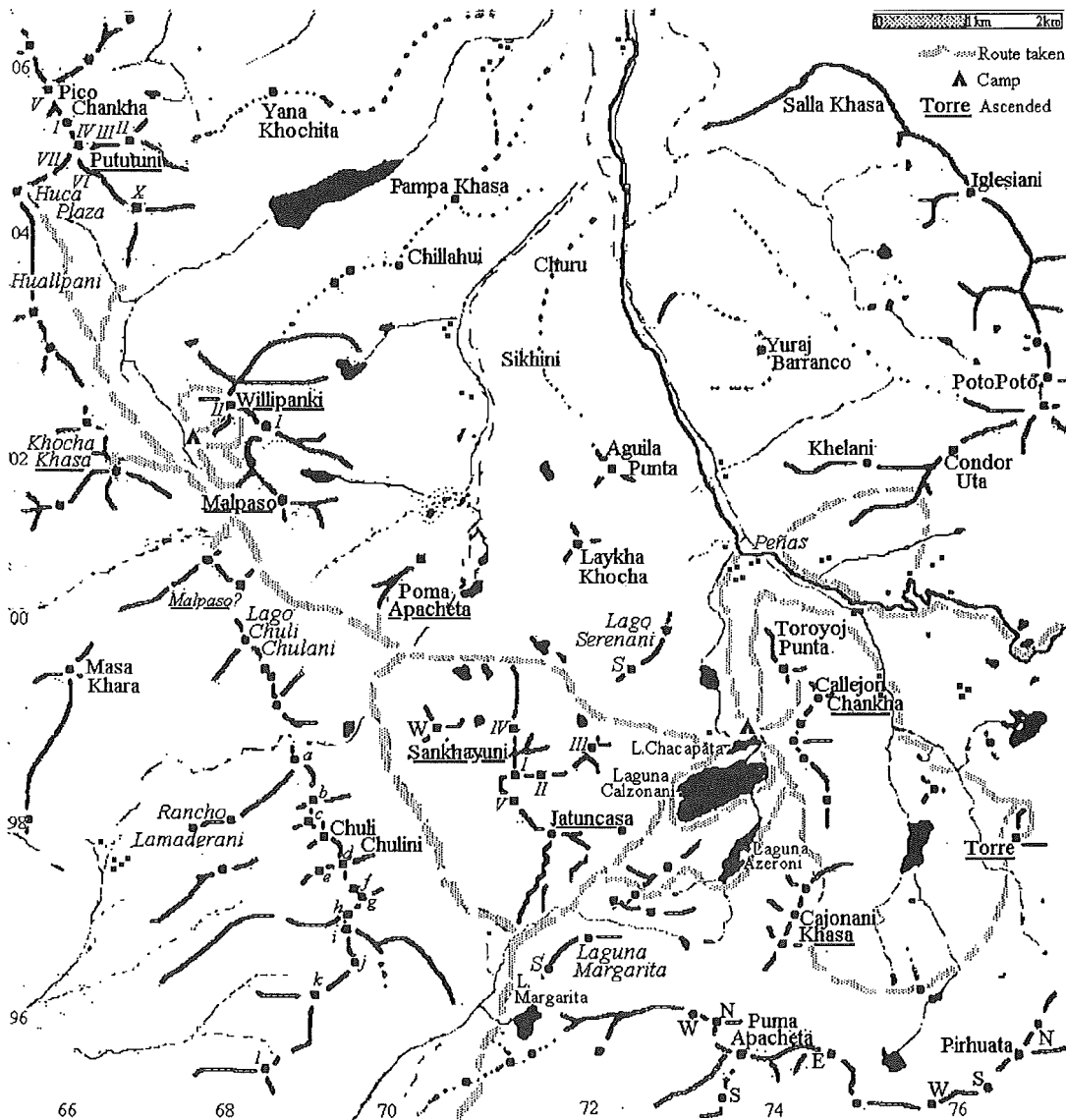
Cerro Torre

A short exposed climb on north-east side protected this distinctive isolated barrel-shaped peak. The summit was caimed.

Cerros del Lago Chuli Chulani

Three unnamed peaks forming a ridge running approximately north-south

were climbed, on 30th June, by Rory and Duncan. The ridge is south of Cerro Willpanki, west of Cerro Poma Apacheta and north of Chuli Chulini. All three peaks present steep scree faces to the east, and very steep buttresses of rotten rock to the west, with caps of loose but continuous rock on their summits. The southern peak of the three is the highest of the range. Each was ascended by struggling up the scree then mild scrambling up the summit rocks. The views, particularly from the highest summit, were extensive and impressive. The peaks appeared to be unclimbed but the extensive scree makes them rather unattractive.



Our routes in the Cocapata area

Return trip

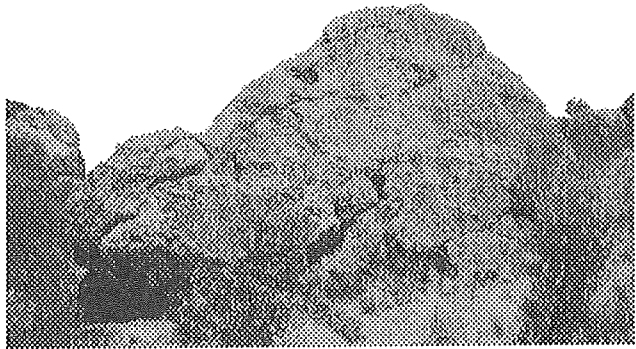
Our return via Cochabamba to La Paz was eventful and protracted when all we wanted was get under the Hostal Naira's hot showers.

As we descended towards the Quillacollo suburb to the north of Cochabamba the steep, rutted and boulder strewn track proved too much for an already damaged leaf spring on one of the vehicles. This had to be nursed along to one of the many garages on the main road. Given the state of most roads and the overloading of trucks repairing and replacing leaf springs is a thriving business in Bolivia. The repair would take a couple of hours.

At this point it seemed logical to *do* something and we already had a half-hearted plan to visit some ruins above the village of Sipe Sipe which was several kilometres away. We shifted all the gear into the damaged vehicle and all the gringo into the good one along with Jose and Rafael as driver. Thankfully Rafael, a calm, tolerant, patient chap is a devout Catholic who crossed himself before each journey.

Sipe Sipe is on a side road maintained by the local authorities and paid for through a toll collected by a one armed man dressed, like most older, rural males, in a dark suit. The main plaza was a hive of leisurely activity and looked an ideal place to stop for a cool beer. Indeed this was suggested but the hardened travellers amongst us insisted that the ruins were only twelve kilometres up the hill side.

Those twelve kilometres were on a track which steadily deteriorated through rough, corrugated, rutted, loose and landslipped to the point where we were lurching from side to side, looking over abrupt drops and



The condor's head rock at the Inca-Rakay ruins, Sipe Sipe

searching for traction on the steep gravel surface. It would have been quicker to walk apart from the effects of the altitude and the scorching heat. It took 1¼ hours to cover the 12km.

We were shaken by the journey, but not stirred by these ruins of a supposed administrative centre overseeing the agricultural valley. Only a bureaucrat would consider placing it so far from the centre of activity. The walls were largely collapsed and little remained. Michael worked hard to remain enthusiastic and eventually tracked down the rock shaped like a condor's head and found behind it the 14m long tunnel mentioned in the guide book as traditionally supposed to exit in Cuzco. We would advise other parties to opt instead for the beer in Sipe Sipe. Weeks later, when we again found ourselves struggling to get a 4WD through a streambed-cum-road in Chile, Rafael was to be heard muttering "Sipe Sipe" accusingly.

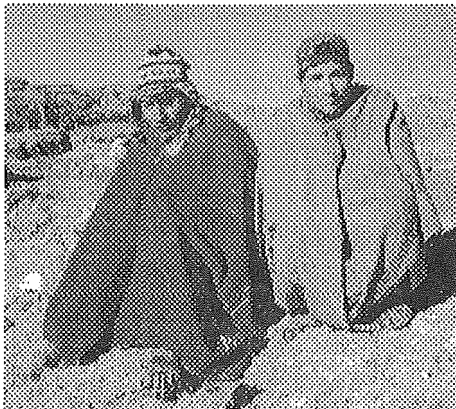
The gravity assisted journey down was quicker and we found the other vehicle, long since repaired, waiting by the main road.

Crossing westwards over the main Cordillera Oriental to the altiplano, now on good paved roads, we arrive at the various toll stations and checkpoints on the way to La Paz. These are bristling with police and the military, much more so than normal.

We gather that there have been outbursts of civil unrest over government plans to switch control of schools and teacher training to the universities in a bid to improve standards. To prevent the mobilisation of demonstrators the military have been called in to enforce a movement restriction order. Traditionally the teachers have supported the general workers union, COB, and, it appears, the favour was being returned. A few times over the following weeks, when in La Paz we were to see well organised mass demonstrations by students bringing city centre traffic to a slow crawl for hours at a time.

On returning to La Paz we were to read the newspaper headline *Slight*

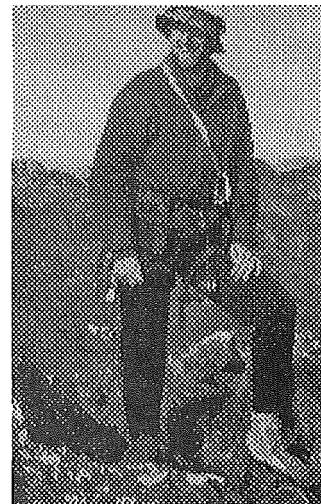
Tremor Shakes Cochabamba (Bolivian Times, July 15, 1999). On our last day of climbing, at about three in the afternoon, we had noticed extensive rockfall on the opposite face and had wondered what the cause was. It must have been that reported earthquake measuring 3.9 on the Richter Scale with its epicentre actually in the Tunari mountain range. Thankfully it appeared to have caused no damage or injury though it must have had a psychological effect on the local people who suffered in the deadly 5.9 strength quake that hit the region on May 22, 1998, killing over a hundred and practically destroying Aquile and Colollo Grande to leave over 20000 homeless. It is possible that what we experienced was merely one of over a thousand aftershocks.



This Cocapata report was compiled by Michael Smith and Rory Newman.

Visitors to base camp

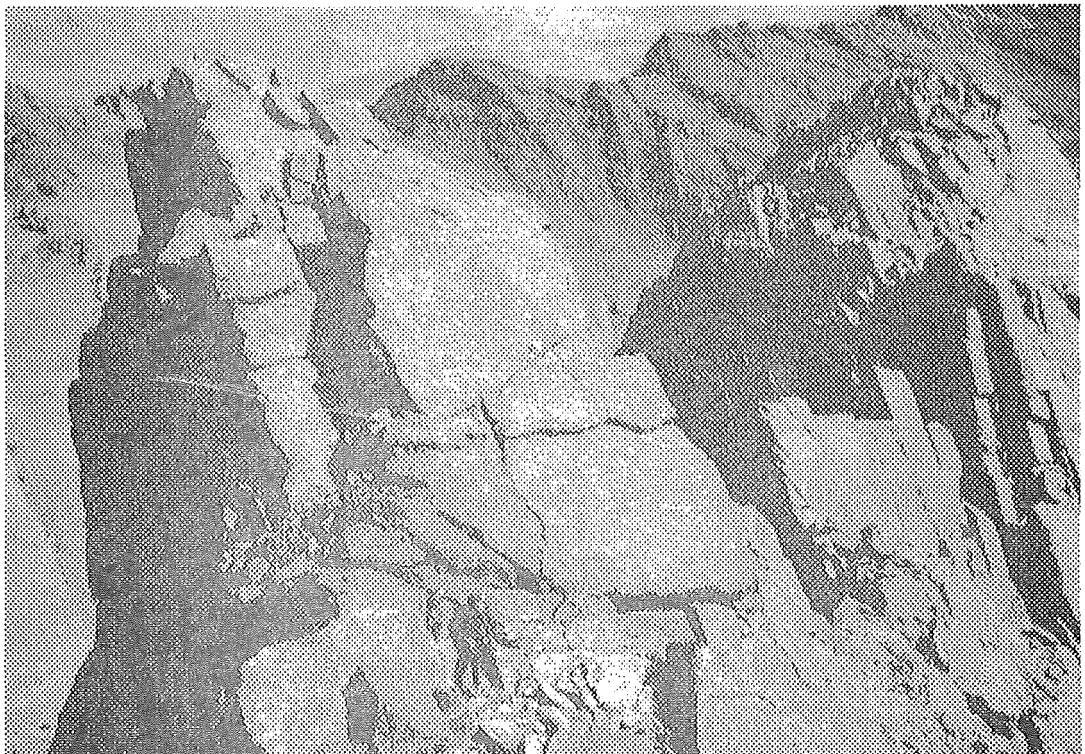
Michael Smith on the top of Jatuncasa





David Hick by the summit cairn of Willpanki II

Michael Smith and Tim Josephy on a false summit of Sankhayuni V, the Condor's Nest



Cordillera Real

The Cordillera Real was chosen as the trekking area for its simplicity of access from La Paz, the attractiveness of its peaks and availability of experienced support. It provided all of these and inspired the hardened, experienced trekkers with the opportunities for further visits.

Besides the trekking visit a few other excursions were made into the Real including a day ascent of Cerro Charquini [Biggar, p94] as part of the acclimatisation and a final-day walk from La Cumbre approaching Cerro Wila Mankilisani (Biggar, p94/S)

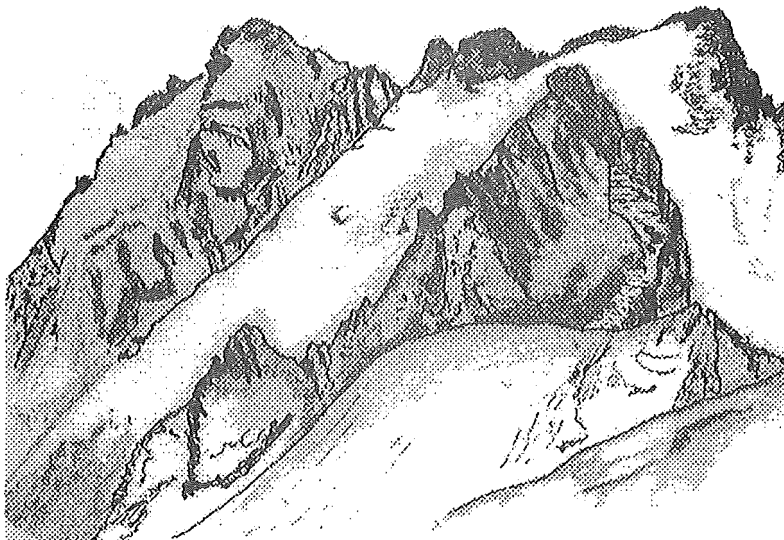
Charquini Tim Josephy

Duncan, Rory and I decided to use the spare day before we set off for the Cocabata to go up and look at Huayna Potosi (6088m), hoping to get as far as base camp. Jose provided us with a vehicle and driver, and we set off early for the Zongo Pass. Once clear of the dismal slums of El Alto, we took rough dirt roads past abandoned copper mines up towards the white cone of Huayna Potosi. The views are stunning: there can be few places

where you can get so close to such a big mountain. The advanced camp (Campo Argentino) could just be seen high on a glistening glacier. Two tiny dots could be seen working up the vast moraines below the glacier and we began to have second thoughts. In our state of acclimatisation, we might spend the whole day grovelling about in the moraines. On the opposite side of the pass we could see another, smaller mountain. Yossi Brain's excellent climbing guide gave Charquini (5400m) a passing mention (p143). Armed with the information that the walk in was along an aqueduct, and with the help of a dotted line on a sketch map, we decided to give it a try. We soon found the aqueduct and set off in fine style. Round the first corner we stopped in astonishment. The aqueduct, about two feet wide and deep, with a twelve inch retaining wall, snaked across a vertical cliff about 1500 feet high. Rejecting the idea of walking in the channel because of the risk of frostbite later from wet feet, we teetered along the rim. Far below, beyond the foot of the cliff the ground dropped steeply to the track, where a "plume of dust marked a bus negotiating the dizzy hairpins of the

Zongo Pass. Occasional overhangs enlivened the proceedings by causing us to stoop, and we tried to ignore the feeling that a slip would probably precipitate us straight through the roof of the bus.

Once past the cliff the going was easy and we soon turned up over moraine towards the glacier.



Charquini and Cerro Wila Mankilisani from the south-east
sketched by Michael Smith

A faint path made life easy, and we stopped at a pretty glacial tarn to put on crampons. A few steep feet took us onto the perfect snow of the glacier. We were all feeling the altitude now as we weaved between well defined crevasses towards a col. Clouds had been building for a time, and now visibility dropped in a light snowstorm. We left the col and continued up mixed ground until suddenly there was no more up. The summit was a pile of blocks on a knife edge ridge, with a terrific drop on the far side. Occasional rents in the cloud allowed views of wild mountainsides and huge crags.

Our elation at having made the summit at over 17500 feet was tempered somewhat by the sight of another pinnacle, about 400 yards away, and apparently higher. Duncan (Mr Gadget), produced a miniature clinometer and proved conclusively that it was, in fact, lower. We set off down in high spirits and made good time until Duncan announced that he had been suffering for some time with headaches and nausea. He was by now feeling pretty bad and descending was not helping very much. Duncan's nausea and lack of balance made the crossing of the aqueduct somewhat exciting. We roped up and put him in the middle, intending to throw ourselves flat in the channel if he lost his balance. He didn't, and we didn't have to, so eventually we reached relative safety where the steepness eased. Here we found a plaque on the rock commemorating an Israeli who had attempted to ride a motorbike across! He had not made it very far.

Relaxing in the minibus on the way back we felt pretty pleased with ourselves. There is no doubt the best days are always the unplanned ones.

Trekking through the Cordillera Real Alan Kay

"Many people who climb high (over 8000ft - 2500m) are fit on arrival but feel ghastly over the next couple of days, with headache, breathlessness, insomnia, fatigue, poor appetite, nausea and dizziness"

This quote from *The Medical Handbook for Climbers* by Peter Steele could hardly have been more apt for some of the YRC party on arrival at La Paz. The city lies, somewhat astonishingly, in a huge bowl-like valley at 3600m, but the airport is on the Altiplano which forms the rim at 4000m, and therefore all medical advice about acclimatisation has to be adjusted to these statistics.

The pilot of our American Airlines jet did his bit to help us as we descended towards the airport from our cruising altitude of 37000ft in the last twenty minutes of the flight. He gradually adjusted the cabin air pressure from 5000ft to 15000ft a case of descending and ascending at the same time.

The trekking party comprised the following:

David Atherton
Derek Bush
Albert Chapman
Ian Crowther
Iain Gilmour
Alan Kay
Alan Linford and
David Smith

Their average age was 64¼ years and ages ranged from 62 to 71 years.

Our trek in the Cordillera Real started on 26th June, with a drive in 4 wheel drive vehicles, scheduled to last eight hours but which in fact took ten hours. From La Paz we drove up on to the altiplano, through initially

dreary scenery, but eventually we turned towards the hills, and lunched on a ridge high above the town of Sorata. A maze of interconnecting ridges, some covered with luscious vegetation, shifting clouds and varying light made this a delightful lunch spot. We descended to Sorata and spent a short while looking round the centre of this beautiful town. It is at a mere 8800ft in height, is therefore warmer than La Paz, and there is a feeling of mild affluence about the place. The town centre and palm tree lined square are similar to some small towns in Spain, a clear reminder of its colonial past. Sorata merits more time, and with hindsight we should have stayed there overnight, and perhaps located its "Ristorante Italiano", reputedly the best (perhaps the only) Italian restaurant in South America.

We had to press on, however, to get to the village of Cocoya where the trek was to start. Leaving Sorata and the valley of the Rio San Cristobel, the road abandoned any attempt at remaining horizontal, and for the next four hours the vehicles were either ascending or descending on ever diminishing tracks at angles between 20 and 30°, with sharp hairpin bends, mist and thin rain thrown in for good measure.

On arrival at Cocoya, the end of the road in every conceivable way, Jose, our agent and guide for the next four days, handed out our tents for erection. Most of us have enough experience at this job, and can put up almost any tent, or so we thought, but the American made "Walrus" tents defeated us all. Imagine being given a bundle of thick knitting needles and a sheet of nylon, and being told to make a tent; throw in the poor fading light and drizzle, and you might be able to visualise how we felt. It took four or

five days of help and instruction by Jose before all of us could both erect and dismantle these wretched tents.

So at last we were able to start our much planned, much discussed traverse of the Cordillera Real. Day 1 was suitable for an introduction to trekking in the Andes - a gradual ascent of the valley behind Cocoya to the Sarani Pass at 4500m, along fairly well graded paths. The valley was brown with winter vegetation, but the view from the pass was of tantalising snow covered peaks in the Chiaroco Massif. Jose pointed out three condors and an eagle high above the valley, the first of regular sightings in this part of the trek.

A few of the "hares" in the party got too far ahead and subsequently wished they hadn't - perhaps a useful lesson in this remote terrain for maintaining adequate group contact.

Derek was still recovering from a stomach upset, and David A was beginning to show signs of mild altitude sickness, so progress was slow on the steep descent from the pass. We arrived at our campsite near Chajolpaya in daylight, but in drizzle thick enough to require waterproofs for the one and only time on trek. It added an urgency to the erection of the oddly shaped "Walruses".

On day two we headed for the Negruni Pass, a climb of 900m. on a rough scrambly sort of path. It was not easy to discern the direction of travel because of the many spurs, hanging valleys and boulder fields around, but gradually we gained height. A short rocky descent brought us to an intermediate col, our lunch spot, with views back towards Chajolpaya, and over to the wild upper part of the valley. After lunch we applied ourselves to the long

arduous grind to the top of the Negruni Pass. The pass was just clear of snow but glass hard ice led immediately from the pass to the attractive peaks of Negruni Chico and Negruni Grande. Fortunately on the descent from the pass we were able to circumvent most, though not all of the ice, but without ice axes at this stage of the trek, some care was needed before we got to ice free rocks.

We had struggled a bit on the final pull to the pass, but we had, of course, not merely climbed 900m, we had ascended from 4000m to 4900m, a respectable feat on the second day of the trek. It had taken us just over four hours.

Descent to the campsite was through a mixture of scree, then a marshy area, finally the path traversed the hillside high above a scree choked lake, quite attractive with the patterns of stones formed by the old inflow and outflow channels. We arrived at our campsite by Negruni lake almost four hours after leaving the Negruni Pass, and in the last few minutes of daylight. It had been a long hard day, especially for our two unwell members, but on the bright side, arriving late with the rearguard, I found that one of the llama drivers had kindly erected the wretched tent for me.

Llamas were our "beasts of burden" for the entire trek, though we had three separate teams of them. At Negruni Lake the first team returned to Cocoyo, and the second team joined us, augmented by a pony and a donkey. The llama drivers for this team were three amiable brothers who helped with tents, carrying kit bags, and were delightful company. There were about twenty llamas in the team, each able to carry a load of 20 kgs. With relatively small heads atop long necks, the llamas have a superior,

haughty appearance, as they literally look down their noses at the smaller, human species. At the same time they seem quite dainty, but they can apparently spit 5m at anything that troubles them, and can also kick sideways - obviously an animal to admire from a distance.

Our campsites and consequently the length of the daily stages were always dictated by availability of water and flat dry land, and we had a choice next day of either a long trek or a shorter one of about four hours, and we decided on the latter. The nearer site was apparently sheltered by a few trees and bushes and was relatively low down, and this last point was important, as a further low camp was needed to help with acclimatisation. We went down valley passing by a few adobe buildings and small farmsteads where potatoes were spread out on the ground for freeze drying. Potatoes seemed to be the only crop, and they were grown in the most unlikely places, with patches more often than not high up on steep sided valleys - presumably the aspect of the slope as well as drainage of the potato patches was important for their growth. We saw people only from some distance, except of one occasion as we rounded the corner of a building and came across two small girls who were playing, the elder girl, perhaps eight or nine years old looking after the younger child who was about three or four years. Both girls were dressed in clean smart dresses with their hair carefully combed, and faces were clean, bright and inquisitive, as well they might be when a gang of strange gringos turns up in the valley. We could only "speak" to them in sign language, but smiles can be very communicative, and the elder girl let us take her photograph; it was eventually too much for her younger

sister, however, and she took flight, hardly surprising, really!

Our campsite lived up to its description and we were able to relax and wash previously unwashed bodies and clothes in the nearby stream. The llama drivers and our kitchen staff did likewise, and clearly appreciated an easy day. As the afternoon progressed cloud drifted into our valley from the Yungas, a reminder that we were not far from the Amazon forest, but at dusk the cloud melted away.

As we prepared to get into our tents and snuggle into our four season sleeping bags, the llama drivers merely covered themselves with a llama skin lay on the ground and slept - yet another of life's lessons in humility.

Just before turning in I looked up at the Milky Way in all its splendour, and the Southern Cross; there was the occasional shooting star, then suddenly a vivid streak of bright orange light flashed across the sky and disappeared from sight behind a high ridge - possibly a piece of space debris burning out in the Earth's atmosphere. The stillness of our mountain valley was complete, not a sound could be heard, and the night was full of peace.

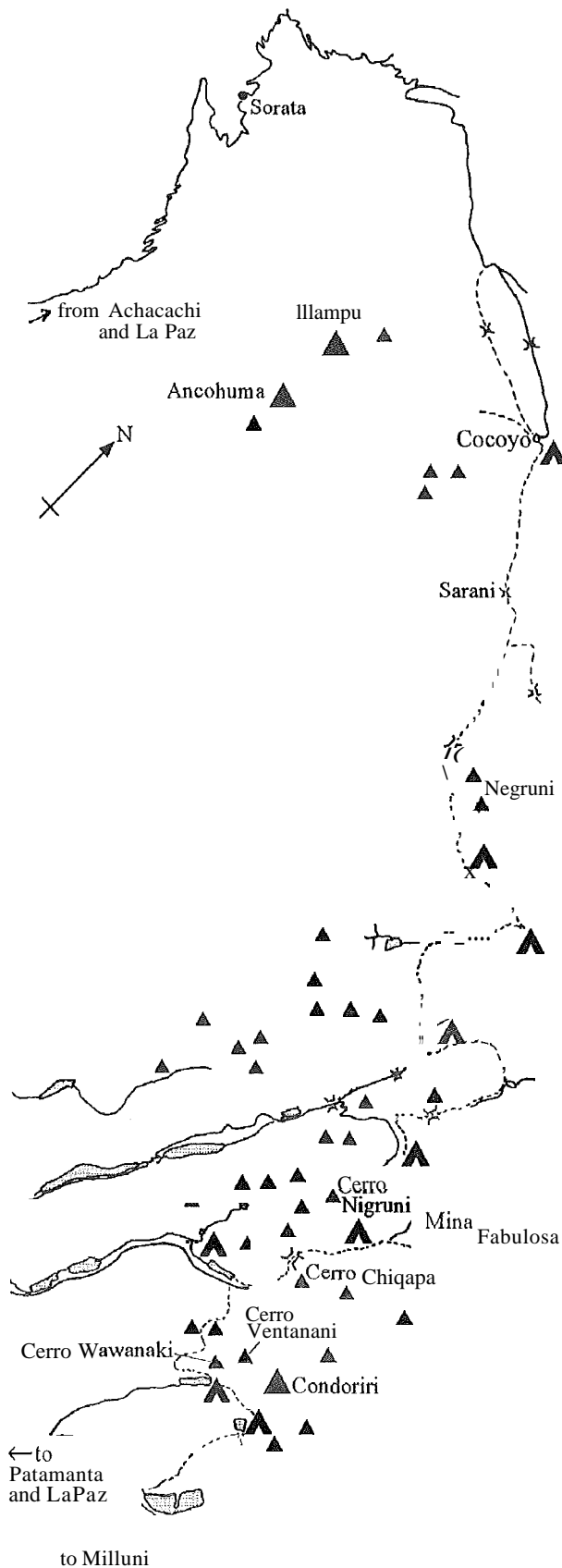
It is, I suppose, a form of poetic justice that a short day is immediately followed by a long day, and that is how it turned out for us. A long slanting rise up the valley side on a dusty slender path brought us into a hanging valley where more potatoes were laid out for freeze drying. There was a trickle of a stream in this valley, and it was dammed in one or two places, with more potatoes placed in the ponds to produce a type of fermented potato, so Jose told us. We gradually wound round the sides of the hanging valley, past incredibly steep cultivation patches (potatoes

again), over the main ridge, and then a long pleasant descending traverse into the next main valley, the valley of the River Amawayá Jawira. This valley forms one of the very few "through routes" in the Cordillera Real, and a rough jeep track comes in from the south west and eventually links up with the road to La Paz. Jose had arranged for a vehicle to meet us at the highest point of the track; our rendezvous was successful, and we received fresh supplies of food, including bananas which were immediately pounced upon.

We also had a change of guide here as Jose had to return to La Paz to go on to our climbing group, and his replacement was Juan Carlos, an amiable young man of 28 years.

Carlos started in the afternoon in a way which was to be repeated occasionally, namely steeply uphill, and fast. We soon slowed him down, however, for the terrain was rough and broken, and we were heading into a high hanging valley the entrance to which was not particularly obvious from below. Some of us had much trouble with this slope and as we gradually gained height a thin playful type of mist began to form. As we neared the lip of the valley we were treated to the most superb aerial display of the trip when five condors flying low, just about ridge height, dipped and darted about on the thermals with obvious enjoyment, and two or three smaller birds attempted to harry them along. The thin mist added a touch of unreality to it all, making one want to pinch oneself to be reminded that we were deep in the Bolivian Andes at 17000 feet.

The sighting did wonders for morale, as did Carlos' comment that our campsite was 400m distant, not 400m of ascent away.



The campsite was dramatic - a narrow valley floor with just enough flat space for our tents, a tantalising ridge on three sides of us, and beyond the

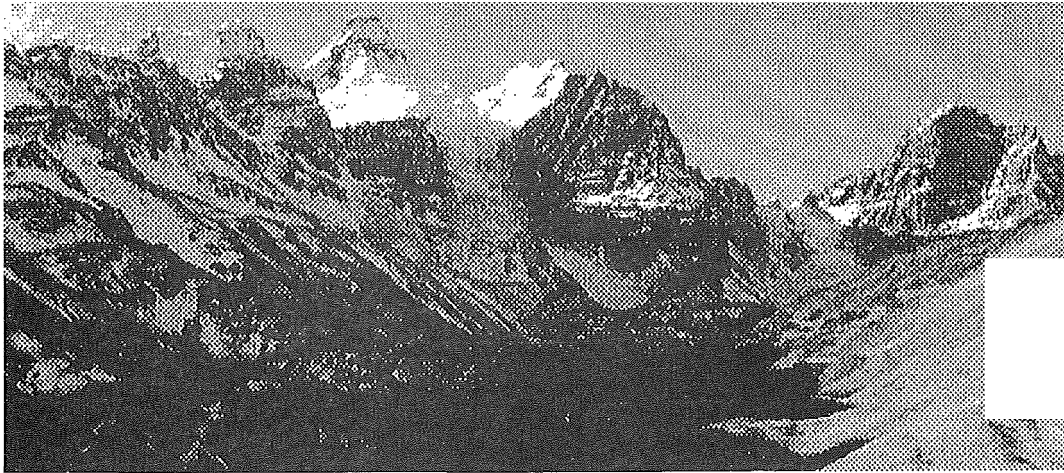
boulders of the lip, a view of distant ridges merging into one another in the late afternoon light. Far distant were the thicker clouds of the Amazon jungle. In this narrow valley the sunlight was lost early, and it soon became dark and cold.

Our onward route was ever upwards to the top of our hanging valley, followed by a rough scrambly descent to a large lake, the Qinasini Quta. This was one of those spots where a sensible person just stops and silently takes in all the surrounding countryside. Blue sky, dramatic mountains, shimmering lake, good company; is there anywhere a more delightful combination? On the lake were two Andean geese, a worthwhile addition to our bird list.

Southwards we went, past other lakes, over a 5100m pass, then a long descent on scree beside crumbling cliffs to a valley bottom campsite at the junction of three sizeable valleys. Ridges of jet black rock on three sides looked like enlarged versions of the Black Cuillin or An Teallach, and are almost certainly unclimbed.

We were close to a track leading to the Mina Fabulosa and we followed this track next day until we came in sight of the mine some 300m below us - just the usual heap of waste material to see and nothing else, though crucially there was a vehicle track leading from the mine southwards through the Cordillera to La Paz, some four hours drive away.

This had to be a short day, and at 1.30pm we camped in the valley of the Chiqapa Jawira, about a mile from the mine. Above us and to the south was the Cerro Chiqapa pass, at 5100m, and known to be choked with snow and ice on its southern side; it had been decided that whilst we rested



Condoriri group with high steep peak being Cabeza del Condor, 5648m

next day, our three llama drivers would climb to the pass and hack out a route for the llamas to descend.

David A had developed a bad cold and throat infection, and hadn't been going well for a few days, and furthermore he hadn't been able to acclimatise properly during the trip. Faced as we were with a succession of longer days over high ice covered passes, he decided that he should return to La Paz to recover whilst there was an opportunity to do so along the mine track. Carlos therefore climbed high on the ridge to call La Paz on his mobile telephone, and requested a vehicle. Thus at 5pm David left us on what turned out to be a six hour journey to La Paz, and whilst this was undoubtedly the right decision for him, it was nevertheless sad for our group to lose one member.

Whilst we waited for the vehicle to arrive at the mine, some of us wandered round the adjacent ridges and comes, and in a high come at about 4700m beneath Cerro Nigruni, I suddenly found myself too close for comfort to three or four cows with a frisky, defensive young bull in attendance (surely a record height for bull), and I beat a hasty retreat.

The llamas, pony and donkey beat us to the top of Cerro Chiqapa pass, and

had descended and were clear of the snow and ice before we topped the pass. Llamas mayor may not appreciate beauty in their surroundings, but we definitely did, and some of us looked longingly at the summit of Cerro Chiqapa, 300m or so above the pass. There was no time to climb it, for steep ice, cornices and loose rock would have meant a detour of two or three hours. We followed the pack animals down the head wall of the valley, and although the route was straightforward, some care was needed on the ice, and we lunched beside a small, part frozen lake just clear of the ice. Here one of us (he'd better remain anonymous) broke through the frozen crust at the lake edge and was lucky to struggle out wet only to thigh height.

A rough, and in places very wet descent into the teeth of a strong head wind brought us to camp at the southern end of lake Alka Quta, the biggest lake we saw on trek. We had a change of llama team here, and the old team, returning home in two days, had firstly to reverse yesterday's route and re-ascend the 5100m ice bound pass - anyone of us who previously thought little or nothing of humble llamas, ponies and donkeys would by now have changed his mind.

Our route went eastwards across more roughly angled valley slopes to a pass just north of Cerro Wawanaki, at 5258m. Carlos disappeared for a while, but we followed the new llama team down into a big rocky valley beneath the pass, in terrain that looked like the roughest of the Rhinogs of North Wales, but on a gigantic scale. Woe betide anyone who got lost here! When Carlos reappeared we learned that he'd climbed higher to get a strong enough signal to telephone his girlfriend in La Paz!

In traversing round to lake Juri Quta, our destination for the day, we crossed wide scree slopes, made up entirely of small stones arranged into lines by the process of frost heaving. So uniform were the patterns of the lines that they looked as though a gigantic comb had been used to form them.

Juri Quta was one of the most beautiful campsites of the trip, a fairly long and narrow lake with the ice covered Cerro Janchallani forming an impressive backdrop. Overnight it snowed, adding even more beauty to what was already a "chocolate box picture". The snow delayed our departure next morning, when we faced yet another steep and rough ascent eastwards towards Cerro Kuntui, then a long descent northwards over scree to Chiyara Quta, the site of the Condoriri base camp.

So far our campsites had been very remote, devoid of any other trekkers, so it was now with a minor culture shock that we had to share our campsite with three other groups, all engaged in climbing on Condoriri or neighbouring peaks. We spent three days here, surrounded by peaks averaging 5500m, many of them within the ability of a number of YRC

members - it was a bit like the better parts of the European Alps, but a lot higher, and with no crowds. Some of us climbed a peak to the west which acquired the name "Austria", but is I believe more correctly named Cerro Ventanani - 5408m; others took the opportunity to recover from a bout of "Delhi belly" which had affected everyone except Iain G and Alan L. On day three these two took Carlos onto the glacier between the camp and Condoriri and practised snow and ice techniques.

The trek finished with a four hour walkout to Laguna Tuni, a large reservoir, where the land cruisers were waiting. Three hours later we were in La Paz, enjoying the luxury of hot water and trying to remove the two week accumulation of grime and grease.



Currency conversion

Transactions could be made in either the national currency, New Peruvian Sols, Bolivianos (B\$) or Chilean Pesos or, alternatively, in US Dollars (US\$). One US\$ was at this time equivalent to approximately £0.62p, 5.7S01s, 5.6B\$ or 880Pesos.



Holding a llamas ears at Condoriri camp to keep it still while it is loaded

The Trials of a Pensioner on Trek Derek Bush

I'd got it all planned: trekking in the Andes with a maximum pass height of no more than 16500ft. Have a couple of days rest in La Paz and then go out and climb a straight-forward snow peak even if it is over 21500ft. No problem! Done it all before (well almost) on two previous trips to Nepal. What's more the food this trip promises to be more to our liking. "Dream on Bushy-boy" as Albert would say. The reality proved somewhat different.

I should have been forewarned. Our current President had said so. He had been there in 1988. Trekking in Nepal is thirty to forty years old whereas in Bolivia it is in its relative infancy. Almost always in Nepal except on its high mountain passes the tracks are adequate but in Bolivia there are stretches of steep hillside to negotiate where paths seemed non-existent or of little use. Failure to lift your ski pole or your feet over the high tussocky grass and you were in deep trouble. It was akin to walking in Bowland only twice as steep and 14000ft higher. KE, the Keswick based adventure travel company, described a similar trek as moderate to demanding, hardly a description the average YRC member would view with trepidation.

It was a blow to one's pride that almost every day I was "tail end Charlie". We did not have the safety net, as in Nepal, of having a Sherpa at the front of the party and one bringing up the rear. You were on your own. Carlos, our leader for the second part of the trek was less than half the age of even our "youngest" member. He was too young and innocent to realise what the ageing process does to a person! He was a thoroughly nice guy

but he went like a bomb throughout, partly I suspect because he wasn't too familiar with the route and he had to scout well ahead to make sure he got it right. Once or twice he was saved by timely whistles and shouts from either Arles our cook or one of the llama drivers. One afternoon he did get it wrong and this was after a particularly tiring morning, when we had crossed over a high pass. We had to retrace our steps, a very tiring process for an already tired trekker.

One morning towards the end of the trek I had to stop for a call of nature and was well behind. When I eventually caught up I was put at the front immediately behind Carlos. There had been a light fall of snow in the night and I set my own pace encouraged by the President who was immediately behind. It was a measure of my lethargy that although I was gasping for air there was a general buzz of conversation as if all my other companions were out for a Sunday morning stroll on the riverbank. What a turnoff

All sorts of excuses could be made for my condition. I'd had a bout of sickness and diarrhoea immediately prior to the trek but I got over this. Nearly all the other members had at some stage on the trek the same problem. However although I had no appetite, I should have forced myself to eat more because the food was excellent and there was no excuse for not partaking. It was no coincidence that those who ate well went well; the two fittest trekkers Alan Linford and Iain Gilmour ate everything put in front of them. They also kept free of tummy upsets which may have been due to them using their own drinking utensils throughout the trek, although one can never generalise about these things.



So what other reasons caused me to struggle so often? Had my general physical condition deteriorated so much since the Rolwaling trek two years ago? I must admit I had not been too active in the Spring and early Summer. Glen Etive was a washout, well almost. I hadn't been to Arran but I'd done some jogging and had coped reasonably well at the high level camp week-end at Scoat Tarn where we had a fairly hard day on the Saturday. When we got to Bolivia we did all the right things regarding acclimatisation. We went to Peru and visited the Inca sites at Cuzco and Machu Picchu. Their situations are not as high as the Cordillera Real but always between 8000ft and 10000ft. La Paz airport (El Alto) is about 13300ft and the city where we were staying some what lower at 11800. However when we look at the trek itself we started at the hamlet of Cocoya just over 13000ft and we were at or above this height for the whole of the thirteen days often switchbacking up to 16000ft plus, and down again in a day.

We spent the last few days of the trek at Laguna Chiar Khota (Black Lake) height 15500ft which is the base camp for the Condoriri group of mountains. A magnificent situation. The next day most of the party ascended Pico Austria a relatively easy rock peak at just over 16400ft. I didn't make it, much to my disappointment and the day was only saved by Alan who persuaded Arles our excellent cook to make us a most delicious bacon and onion omelette for lunch. The following day I decided to try the peak on my own but just told the rest of the party I was going for a wander. As all YRC members will know there is something magical about walking on big mountains in solitude. The route goes up fairly steeply to a high plateau which is then traversed to a scree slope. An ascent by a reasonable track brings you to a col perhaps a few hundred feet before the summit. The only company I had were a group of horses grazing high on the plateau plus of course the ubiquitous llamas. I was almost at the top of the scree slope when to my surprise a young Bolivian moving silently and swiftly caught me up. We exchanged greetings although neither of us knew a word of each others language. He must have been concerned about my lack of upward progress as he stopped behind to make sure I chose the correct one of several alternative paths. At the col he was waiting for me and what little food I had, I shared with him, for which he was grateful. We took a photograph of each other with my camera, using the Cabeza de Condor as a backdrop. (His snap turned out better than mine - no comment needed.) He then enquired by sign language where I was going and I indicated down. I wish I had told him the summit of Pico Austria as I am sure he would have

accompanied me. For some strange reason I thought my friends below would be worried about me. It showed how unwell I was! My Bolivian friend then continued over the col and I thought that was the last I would see of him. However he soon caught and passed me and he must have reached the base camp at least an hour before I arrived. I had the thought that there must be dozens of potential Olympic athletes waiting to be discovered in these parts of the high Andes, given of course the correct diet and training routines!

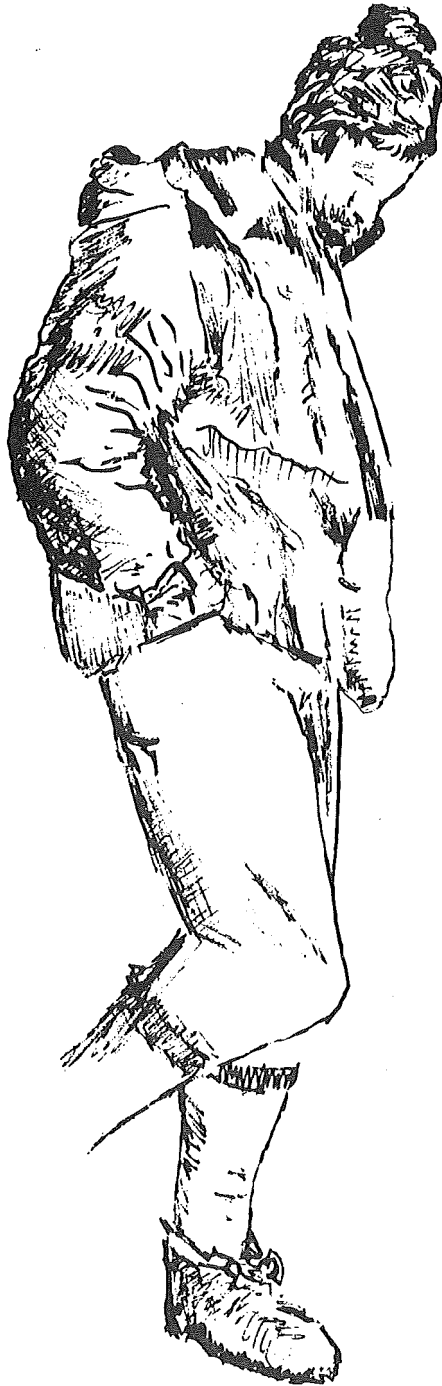
The interesting thing which occurred to me over the trek was that all the Bolivians we met seem to be able to eat European food without any problems. From what I observed both Arles and Rebecca our charming assistant cook plus an assortment of llama drivers and porters all ate the food cooked for us. This was not the case in Nepal where even Motup our

Western educated Indian leader seemed to prefer the more Nepalese version of the food served to us.

However I digress. The more I write the more it appears an apology for being a first class wimp! The reader may think that I did not enjoy the trek. They would be completely wrong. My own personal view was that it was the best I have ever been on. Most of us wished we had been thirty years younger when a lot of the snow peaks we walked under or around would have been climbed. Without hesitation I would say to the younger climbing element in the Club if you want an excellent Alpine type holiday without the crowds, with assured good weather and stable snow conditions get yourself to Bolivia. The base camp at Condoriri would be a good place to start. All you want is three to four weeks holiday, and you could do it much cheaper than our somewhat exotic geriatric excursion.



Michael Smith and Duncan Mackay try the best eatery in Challapata, Bolivia



5000 metres

*Two quick breaths a step,
I'm struggling again,
Nose is blocked,
Dry throat in pain,
I'm out of steam,
My pack opened,
Contents given to the team
We move on again,
Ever upwards as in a bad dream,
Simple track, moderate gradient,
The going hard.*

*My head is canted forward,
Eyes focused on the track,
Unaware of terrain,
Because of arched back,
I don't feel well,
Can't let the team down,
The going is hell.*

*The gradient recedes,
And the col is reached,
We sample the day,
Below, the snow slope looks amenable,
Camp is a couple of hours away.*

David Atherton

Cordillera Occidental Sajama, 6542m

A Novice on Sajama

Iain Gilmour

If you asked a trekker of average YRC age if he would climb to over 21000 feet, the answer would usually be "No", but if you take advantage of YRC teamwork, all sorts of things become possible.

The Bolivian trip splendidly organised by Michael Smith and Alan Kay included a last week joint effort by climbers and trekkers to climb Sajama, Bolivia's highest peak. Both the climbers and trekkers had been active for two weeks at altitudes above the Altiplano (14000ft), and this had given a reasonable degree of altitude acclimatisation. We were glad to be accustomed to the height, and free from AMS symptoms.

After two weeks trekking, often crossing passes at 16000ft, it required some determination to leave our comfortable La Paz hotel, and set out again for Sajama, some 4 hours drive to the south of La Paz, in the desert near the Chilean border. We were again guided by Jose Camarlinghi of Andean Summits, and we motored steadily in a heavily loaded Toyota minibus and an offroad 4x4 car. Our first sight of Sajama was a tiny white peak on the horizon, which grew in size to a massive white volcanic cone as we came closer. We drove into the Sajama National Park, and registered at the reception office before camping at the hot springs a mile or so from Sajama village.

Our camp was at the end of a dirt track, near some volcanic hot springs, and conditions were semi-desert. Some of the keener members of the



David Hick & Duncan Mackay with Sajama behind. The route was near the left skyline.

party went for a swim in the hot water, although swimming at 14000ft is quite tiring. The tough wiry altiplano grass grew in discrete clumps with bare volcanic dust between them. Herds of alpaca and llama wandered throughout the area, tended by local folk from the few remote adobe dwellings. Sajama peak lay to the east of us, and looking north we could see an unclimbed snowy peak with a massive summit tower of unstable rock. To the west of us, two gigantic snow covered volcanoes attracted admiring glances, but the probable ten hour trek to a possible base camp tempered the enthusiasm of the climbers. To the south of us lay a range of snowy volcanoes, and in the crystal clear air one could see occasional puffs' of volcanic dust emerging from one of them.

Moving up to Base Camp, we walked through the thin forest of small

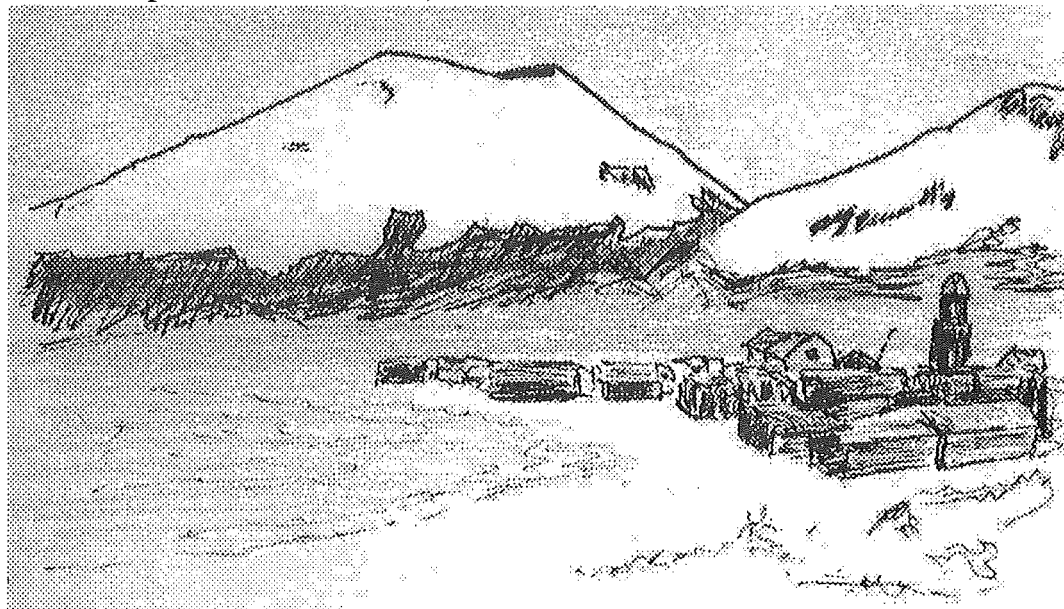
shrubby queflua trees, the highest forest on earth, which covers the lower slopes of the Sajama foothills. Base Camp was in a wide flat basin at 4600m, and our muleteers delivered the bags and tents in plenty of time to enjoy the last of the afternoon sunlight. The plan was to move up to High Camp the next day, with each climber carrying his own gear, but the tents and food being carried by porters. The effects of gippy tummy and chest infection had reduced our numbers to Michael Smith, David Hick, Duncan Mackay, Rory Newman, Too Josephy, Alan Linford, Iain Gilmour, and our guide, José Camarlinghi.

My first benefit from teamwork was the excellent tuition given by Alan Linford to Juan Carlos and me on the Condoriri glacier. A bit of ice climbing and abseiling had greatly improved my confidence on ice. My second bit of teamwork was simple but crucial, when Rory saw me struggling with a gigantic rucksack and muttering about dropping out, he advised me to offload sleeping bag to the porters and to get started. The climb to High Camp crossed scree, then some . . . of hard snow, onto

a rocky ridge. This ridge ascended past rock towers and eventually we came to a small flat area above a massive rock tower, which stands like a tooth on the volcanic cone of the mountain. This is probably the only suitable camp spot, since all other parts appear to slope at the same general angle of some 35 to 40 degrees.

When we arrived at High Camp, 5600m, we were delighted to find that the porters had erected three of our four tents, and were busy digging a snow platform big enough for the remaining tent. We had a splendid little camp with tents on three levels. Duncan constructed a snow garden seat, where Tim actually fell asleep in the afternoon sun! We looked out onto an amazing view of mountainside and distant space. The key piece of teamwork was by our excellent guide José Camarlinghi who successfully arranged strategy, transport, mules, and porters. José took every problem in his stride and was courteous and patient with all of us.

Our valiant cook, Arles, huddled under a tarpaulin and plied us with afternoon tea, followed by supper of



The Payachatas, Parinacota (left) and Pomerata lie several hours walk from Sajama village MS

sausages and mash. Shortly after our arrival, some porters arrived with tents for a Karakoram Experience party. There was barely enough room for their three tents which were placed above us with minimum shelter.

The night was cold, probably -14°C. as we lay fully dressed in our sleeping bags. What would tomorrow bring? Would I be able to cope with the next day? Turning to simpler matters, I put my leather boots into my sleeping bag at one in the morning, and dozed until camp stirred. We rose at 2:00 am and packed our sacks with the bare minimum of gear. Arles produced breakfast of tea and muesli, and we prepared to depart. At this point my Petzl headtorch decided to fail. It took some encouragement from the team before I could get it to work with a wide pale beam

It was a relief to get going. All doubts and concerns were put to one side as we plodded upwards.

A feature of high snow slopes in the tropical latitude and dry air of Bolivia, is the formation of penitentes. These are blades of ice, in long ridges, or individual spear shapes, varying from six inches to three feet high, and some may even look like kneeling figures - penitentes. The ice may be wafer thin at the tip, and several inches thick at the base, and these penitentes are spaced at intervals of from six inches



Penitentes on a Sajama ridge

to a foot apart. We crossed extensive fields of these devilish creations, trying to tread in between them, or trying to stand on top of them in our crampons. We then made a long ascent of a forty five-degree couloir, which led to a rocky ridge. At an altitude approaching 0000m. Michael had to return, due to a stomach infection which had prevented him from eating properly for days. David accompanied Michael back first to High Camp and then, after a sleep, to Base Camp.

It had always been my intention to climb with Alan Linford, but altitude has peculiar effects on the mind. My ascent became a self-contained struggle, not against the mountain that kindly tolerated our presence, but against myself. As the air becomes thinner, you have to force yourself to keep going, and every fifteen yards becomes a challenge. Daylight began to break at 6:15 am, as we were clearing the last band of small penitentes. The warmth of the rising sun was dissipated by a strong blustery wind, estimated at between 35 and 40 knots. Climbing at altitude, it is often helpful to develop a breathing rhythm such as "Step, breath, breath, step, etc." but when faced with a strong gusty wind such measured progress is not suitable. A more feasible method was "Step, step,

ice axe in, step, step, ice axe in, step, step, ice axe in, and pause for forty seconds of frantic extra breathing" Lurching around like a drunken man, I must have presented a sorry spectacle.

As the route ground slowly upwards on the symmetrical ice cone,



Duncan Mackay on the summit of Sajama

the voice of José from my left shouted something about 6200 metres. I did not know what that meant, but took it as encouragement and plodded on. Another figure appeared going downhill, and ROY gave words of encouragement.

My climbing harness began to slip down over shiny trousers, impeding my progress. I think I was aware of someone behind me, like a St Christopher, keeping an eye on my progress. As I became hobbled by the harness, St. Christopher stepped forward to fix it for me and underneath his goggles and balaclava I could see a distinct likeness to the whiskered face of Tim Josephy.

Shortly after this the angle of slope began to ease, and we emerged onto a flat summit. If I was jubilant, this was tempered by relief, and after a few moments, José, Tim, and I started off downhill. The temperature on the summit was probably around -20°C . and the strong wind made conditions very severe. Duncan Mackay summited, but suffered a temporary frozen eyeball in the extreme wind-chill conditions, while Tim suffered frostbite on the tip of his nose.

Looking down the mountain in daylight for the first time, I was astonished at the length of snowy ridge beneath me. Some minute dots of colour in the distance, which I mistook for climbers, were in fact our tents at High Camp. There was no sign of the other party, who had abandoned their ascent. We used a safety rope in a couple of places on the descent, and returned to High Camp. Arles plied us with cups of tea as we packed tents and rucksacks. Our splendid porters, who had ascended from Sajama village and base camp on succeeding days, returned and collected our tents. Thinking about these porters who had twice ascended from Sajama village on succeeding days, I felt more like a tourist than a mountaineer! We returned to Base Camp that same day and agreed with José that climbing Sajama is gruelling enough, without planning other ascents the next day.

Well, thanks to José, Alan, Rory, Tim, and Duncan, I now have some super memories to look back on. Michael Smith and Alan Kay can be satisfied that their plans for Sajama led to a successful outcome.



Returning to the Sajama high camp at the col

Preparing to leave Sajama Village



Sajama Snippets

The drive out from La Paz to Sajama is now on good surfaced roads for almost all the trip. Turning from the La Paz to Oruro road and heading west towards Arica we stopped at the first checkpoint and neighbouring shops where a village party was in progress. The standard brass band was enthusiastically belting out a shrill melody with heavy bass drum. The notes slurring as the alcohol took its toll. We were engaged in intense but

incomprehensible discussion by one of the older members of the accompanying villagers and pressed to join in the drinking. After a glass there was a move to process to the next cluster of buildings so we could make our excuses and break away.

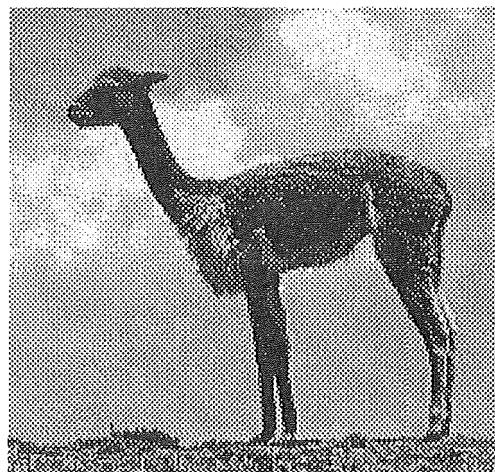
Well on the way to Sajama a deep valley was crossed lined on either side by innumerable rock spires and crags. Alan Kay likened it to "the Bridgestones gone mad". Nearby, set

back from the road, is the Bolivian army mountaineering school.

Arriving at Sajama village the first building seen is the National Park office. This has regular radio contact with La Paz, houses a small museum and has large scale maps displayed on the wall. The ranger there will arrange for the local family whose turn it is on the rota to provide any pack animals or porters required.

The thermal springs are about an hours walk away from the village and are signposted, as are all the features, from the main track north which used to be the road to La Paz. A building by the pool marks the spot in this empty, undulating pampa.

A geyser field is also about an hours walk west of the village. The bubbling springs, hot pools and gurgling noises are interesting rather than dramatic.



Vicuna on a minor ridge above basecamp

Volcan Ollagile, 5868m

Michael Smith

Not having previously climbed an active volcano I expected a rather dull trudge up even slopes and a quick scree run down. The ascent proved much more interesting than that.

The ascent of Ollagile from the north-west is published [Biggar, 1996, p109] but our route approached this isolated volcano from the south-east. Eating lunch on volcanic wavelike rock formations many miles away from the peak, we viewed the facing flank through binoculars. We can make out the steaming fumarole and a likely looking track zigzagging across the face and decide to investigate. Branching left from the track to Avaroa we cross a wide river wash area, take a well graded track steeply up to a cluster of houses then on to a right-hand switchback at 5300m where the road splits into three tracks on the bend. The leftmost heads horizontally

across a snowfield to the Chilean border, the right most to the currently worked mine area and the central one to a previously worked area. As this is the only place for miles along the track where it would be possible to turn the vehicle we decide to stop here and camp. At the other side of the snowfield, somewhat higher was steam emanating from the fumarole. Hydrogen sulphide from this pervaded the air, gave us headaches and clung to our clothes for days.

Three workers came up about four times each 24 hours to fill their lorry and descend. At their 10pm visit they suggest we move our camp from the disused central track round the corner towards the snowfield to be a little further from their turning area for safety. We do this before they return. Via Javier they warned us about mines recently laid along the border by Chilean soldiers.

Our ascent, on 24 July, starts as a steady walk up old, snow covered

mmmg tracks to a ridge (right) of gleaming yellow sulphur crystals running roughly south-south-east.

The route was decorated with pinnacles, eyes and arches and had fresher air. This peters out around 5500m and we cross scree to another ridge and traverse a short way to the summit.

On that traverse a chunk of rock is dislodged and falls to hit Duncan's rucksack.

Sitting at the summit around noon we wonder **if** a more easterly top, further round the crater, is higher. We check

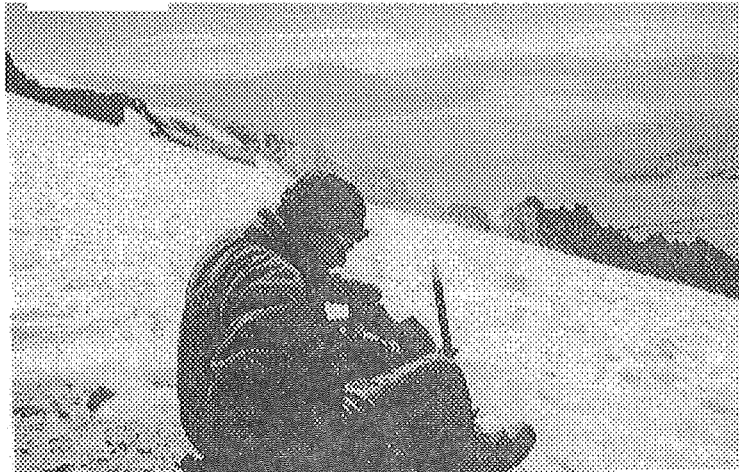


it out but it is not but it did have a windbreak and spent flare cases.

Javier circles anti-clockwise round the crater while Duncan and I go widdershins (clockwise in this hemisphere) past the summit and on a descending traverse to the large fumarole near more old tracks.

The fumarole stank of hydrogen sulphide. Unpleasant from our camp about a mile away it was revolting at close quarters. The local miners had talked of it giving them headaches and stomach upsets. I consoled myself with a recollection of being told that it was noxious only once the concentration was so high that you could no longer smell it.

The column of steam, several metres across at the surface, billowed out and rose hundreds of metres into the air. In the calmer, colder air



Duncan on Ollagüe's summit with a view across the salar and Michael on the subsidiary top with the summit behind



of the night and moonlit this was very impressive. The water content is not surface water but from perhaps 100km down, taken there over thousands of years after being trapped in the subduction zone under the Pacific.

The sulphur thickly coated everything for tens of metres around and left a yellow rime on edges on rocks near the rising vapours.

I could withstand being a hundred metres or so away looking down into the fumarole but soon had a headache. After a retreat to the col joining the main cone with the subsidiary cone carrying the fumarole, we had to pick our return route. The alternatives were a haul back over the summit and descent in clean air or a short direct route across the scree and snows of the corrie which carried the warning of landmines.

On closer questioning it appeared that these soldiers arrived on motorbikes. Given this, the hard snow covering the

area and our strong determination to allow Javier to descend first, there was no real contest. Javier, though, did suggest that the longer route might be safer. Outvoted he set off down a scree which started promisingly but soon became too steep and coarse for comfortable running. It was a relief to reach the hard neve that allowed the use of crampon to within twenty metres of the tents.

Breaking camp was made easier by strong winds having already collapsed our tent. In fact it was only prompt action by the driver, Rafael, who was waiting for us at base, that had prevented our gear being scattered across the mountainside.

We descend to pitch camp, after dark, by a deserted quarry or mining depot, lost on the salar. Driving in the dark we had kept too close to the security of the single railwayline and missed the fork off to San Juan de Rosario. With the light of morning we are soon back on route.



Volcan Licancabur behind Laguna Verde

Michael Smith

Birds of Bolivia

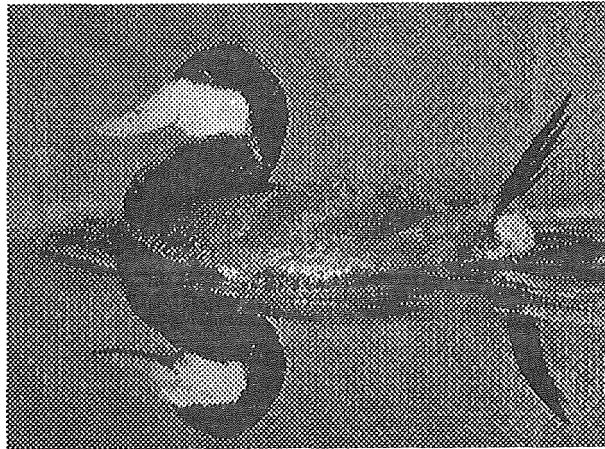
Duncan Mackay

Going from England to any other country always brings with it the challenge of identifying new species. Going to South America is unlike anywhere else in the world because the huge number of species found there. On top of this, almost none of them except the ubiquitous Starlings and House Sparrows occur in Europe.

So with nothing familiar and many families of birds which only occur in South America, Bolivia is quite an ornithological challenge.

Until recently, it was also difficult to get a guidebook to the birds like the field guides we enjoy in Britain. However a new guide to The Birds of Southern South America and Antarctica (De La Pena and Rumboll, 1998), goes some of the way to solving this problem. Though, with more than 1600 species of birds in the region, it is impossible to cover all of them in a single volume. Using this field guide, we were always faced with the possibility that what we were looking at was not included in the book.

The expedition visited a number of different habitats during the six weeks that it was out in the field. These ranged from high Andean peaks and valleys, Altiplano regions of Bolivia, Lake Titicaca, the city parks and gardens of La Paz and Cuzco, the cloud forests of Peru, the Atacama desert, the Pacific shore of Chile and the lakes and salt pans of southern Bolivia. These habitats are in many respects very demanding of the bird species that live there. The temperature extremes and the arid nature of the climate make this a region for birds that are specialists in

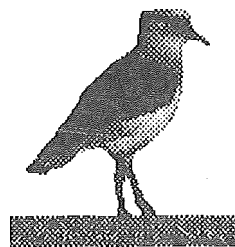


Pan'a, a blue-billed duck on Lake Titicaca

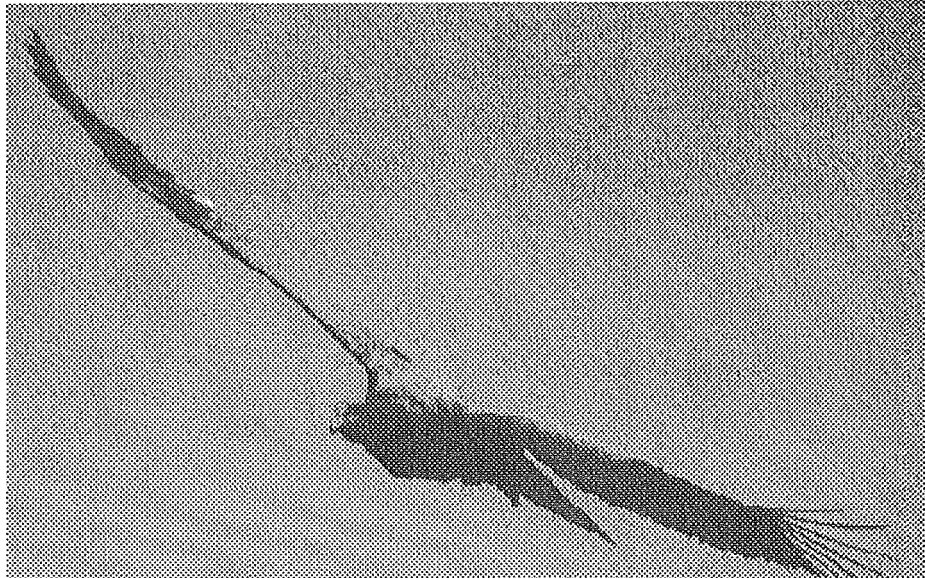
survival. They have to be tough to eke out a living in the Andes.

When we arrived in La Paz, the first birds we saw were flying around the parks and gardens. The Chiguano Thrush and the ubiquitous Rufous Collared Sparrow were seen. House Sparrows and Starlings are also present in large numbers and the Feral Pigeons are almost as abundant and well fed as those in London.

Our journey to Peru across the altiplano went through a variety of habitats, in particular puna and wetland. Eared Doves and Black-Winged Ground Doves were to be seen particularly in agricultural areas, Andean Lapwings were also quite abundant. Pearl Kites, American Kestrel and White Tailed Hawks were also seen. On the rivers were Andean Geese and Southern Pochards. In areas of wetland, we saw Puna Ibis,



Snowy Egrets, Andean Lapwing (left) and Andean Coots. Those sailing on Lake Titicaca saw Pan'a or Ruddy Duck and, slowly flapping in flight, Huacana or Cotili as they are called locally in Aymaran, probably the Night Heron.



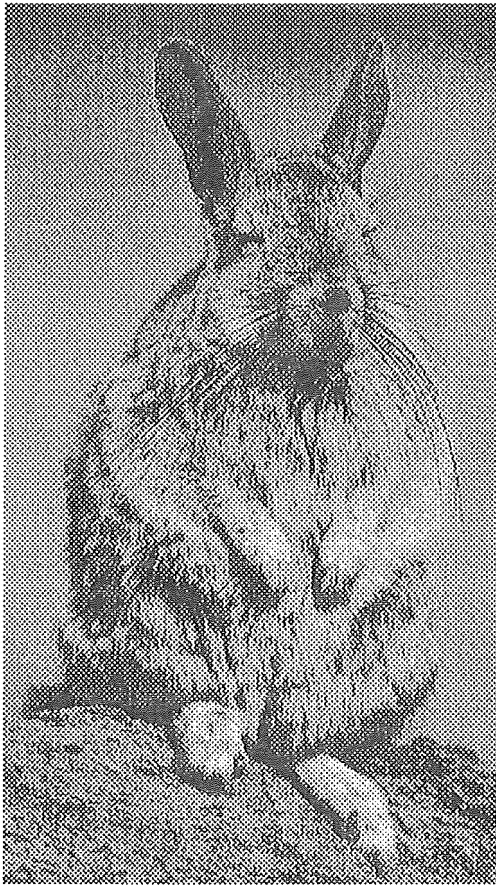
The cloud forest around Machu Picchu contained so many species, and was outside the region covered by the guidebook, that it was not possible to be accurate about identification. The fabulous colours and wonderful songs made a magical spectacle that warrants a whole expedition all to itself. To walk the Inca Trail with a pair of binoculars would be the ideal way to study these birds.

North of Cochabamba we were climbing in the Cocabata area with mountains of between 4500m and 5000m. The valley floors were primarily low grasses, and shrubs typical of puna vegetation. The mountains were free from snow during the winter season when we were visiting. Winter being the time of the year when least precipitation occurs. The local farming was principally potato growing and grazing llama and sheep. The large herds provided a good food supply for the Condors and Mountain Caracaras. We found that most days we could count on seeing at least four Condors. They often flew quite close and on mountain ridges very close fly-bys, sometimes just a few metres away (above), normally

happened at moments when the camera was buried at the bottom of the rucksack.

The bird guide mentions that the young of the Mountain Caracara are coloured brown. However the local people seemed to think that the brown Caracaras were actually females. We were unable to decide which was correct. However some very mature looking Brown Caracaras were present around base camp, and we noticed that on several occasions the birds mobbing Condors were these brown coloured Caracaras. Perhaps the adults don't bother to act aggressively towards their larger cousins.

Our base camp was positioned beside small lakes at the foot of Sankhayuni. Andean Geese, Silver Grebes and Puna Teal were all present on the lakes. Shrike Tyrants, White-winged Cinclodes, Plumbeous Sierra Finches and an unidentified species of Ovenbird were all frequent visitors. A delightful flock of Black Siskins; beautiful black birds with bright yellow wing patches lived among the scrub and rocks close to the shore of our base-camp tarn.



Amongst the mammals Viscacha (above) were abundant in the rocks right up to the tops of the peaks. We also had a large species of vole that lived under the ground sheet of the mess tent in base camp... until one day somebody stepped on it. Another death, that of a horse near base camp was notable in that the Condors and Caracaras only took 48 hours to completely strip the carcass of meat. This large assembly of birds of prey arrived within a very short time of the death and then departed just as quickly, immature Caracaras being left to clean up the few remaining scraps, Some birds were so full of food that they were unable to flyaway when we approached.

Our next climb was made :in the Sajama National Park in the west of Bolivia on the border with Chile. Some members of the expedition were lucky enough to see Lesser Rhea close to the village of Sajama. Amongst the

buildings of the village colourful Sierra Finches and Rufous Collared Sparrows were abundant. Puna Ibis, Andean Geese and Flamingos were found on the wetland areas. Plumbeous Sierra finches were also widespread occurring at quite high altitude. Of the Mammals, seventeen puma are reported to be active in the area, although the only one we managed to see was kept on a shelf in the wardens' office. Wild cameloids, Vicuña, are found in the park. We saw small herds of them close to Sajama Base Camp. Alpaca are the most common grazing animal in the park.

The continuing journey made by two members of the expedition went across the border into Chile. It is remarkable how the numbers of particularly Vicuñas but also some other species increased immediately we crossed the border. This is likely to be influenced by the strong protection that the Chilean government affords the wildlife both in and outside the national parks. Vicuña are protected and very abundant. The wild fowl on the lakes in the area is also very rich. Unfortunately, we passed through rather quickly on a strict time schedule.

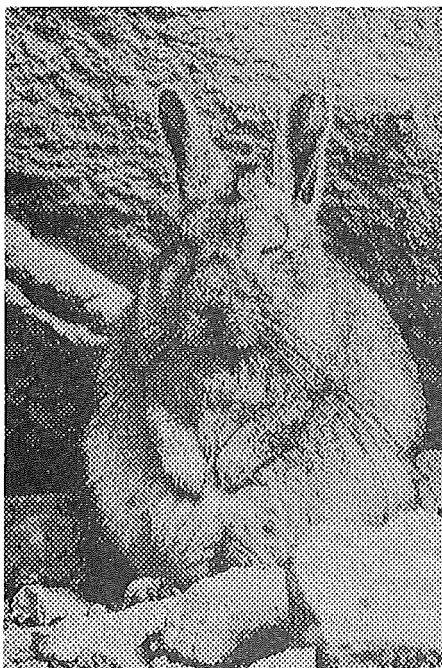
The Pacific seaboard saw a radical change in the bird life. Peruvian Pelicans, Olivaceous Cormorants, Brown and Peruvian Boobies were found in abundance. Some of the island colonies that we saw just offshore south of Iquique were spectacular. A few Oystercatchers were seen among the rocks, notable in that they were completely black. Amongst the gulls, we identified Brown Hooded Gulls and Kelp Gulls. The large number of Turkey Vultures which frequented the beaches was

quite a surprise. They also turned up right in the middle of Iquique roosting in the palm trees outside the town hall, lots of them!

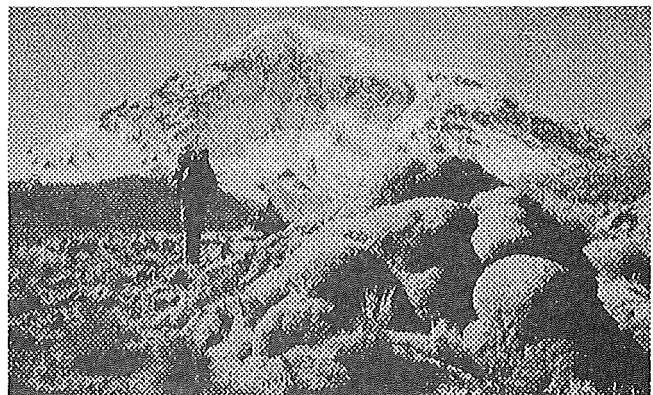
The next stage of the journey saw us returning across the Atacama Desert into Bolivia. The desert itself was devoid of almost all forms of life, although Black Vultures were found in several places. Plumbeous and Red-Backed Sierra Finches, Rufous Collared Sparrows were found throughout the area and in oases we found Speckled Teal, Puna Ibis and Plumbeous Rail. On the Laguna Verde Andean Avocets, Puna Plover and Andean Gulls were present. Whilst Laguna Colarada was the best lake for flamingos and all three species were seen: Chilean, Andean, and James. It was quite remarkable that the flamingos remain standing in the water during the night and become frozen in as the lake freezes over. As

the morning sunshine melts the surface ice, flamingos are liberated one by one to fly off.

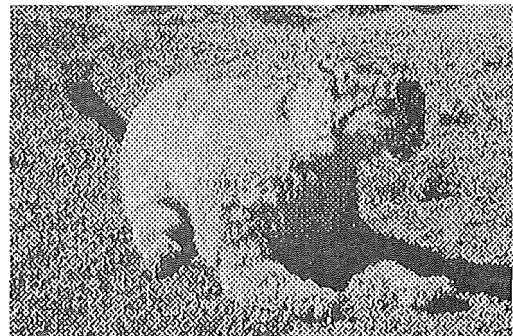
This region of South America is full of birds. The new bird guide made the job of identification easier and hopefully the above notes will give subsequent expeditions a head start on us. They can start to look in detail at some of the more difficult families like the Ovenbirds and Tyrant Flycatchers.



Related to chinchillas, viscachas have a long fluffy tail. Where they are hunted they are seen only as a blur as they tear across scree or crags to the safety of their holes between boulders.



Llaretas is a relative of parsley which is collected and used as fuel. Thousands of individual plants form these bright green solid domes seen here with Sajama and Jose.



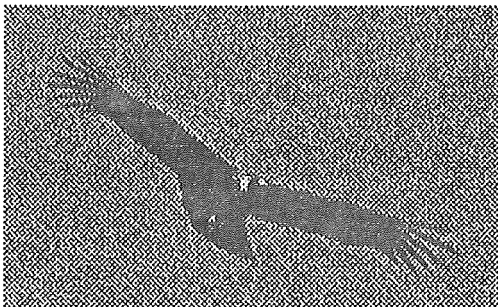
The puma!



Birding on the Trek

Alan Linford

He must hear the question from every group "Jose, when are we likely to see Condors?" His answer was that it would be the second week so mind and eye were conditioned to look for the other birds we expected to see. As it happened our first sightings were of three Mountain Caracara black and white scroungers with red faces and yellow legs, looking thoroughly miserable as they sat by the roadside in thick mist and drizzle, unperturbed by our presence.



During the first day of trekking, Derek's birthday incidentally, and we saw two Condors, their metre long body, three metre wing span and white ermine collar unmistakable despite being high up. We enjoyed a sighting every day until the sixth day when we observe five Condors in one group, harassed by Caracara; a sight our trekking guide Carlos had not seen before. We saw no more for six days.

You may have seen video of Condors but to see one float over the ridge just as we started to descend Pico Austria (Condoriti) gives one an entirely different appreciation of this bird. The terrain there was a beautiful valley with three lakes and it had another surprise in store - a pair of Andean Geese. These are big birds the male three and a half kilos, the female less, coloured mainly white with blue-black primaries. Not only did we see them on the water, which is most unusual, they also carried out a bonding ritual,



Duncan's photos of Caracara on this page and Condors on previous page

We soon made friends with the Sierra Finches charming little birds. The male grey, female speckled, they would wait patiently for us to lift our tents and feed on the bugs beneath - the ground there being moist and frost free. Not so the aggressive Ground (Andean) Tyrant, a flycatcher with an evil red eye, they would dash in and pick the early risers. Bugs never bothered us, but there must have been plenty around for the Tyrants and South Martins,

Finch-sized, grey with white throats, white underparts and red rump, the Common Divca Finch were not unlike our Snow Bunting but seen much higher than expected.

Among the smaller birds were Siskin, South Lapwing and Andean RuffNecked Sparrow.

Snipe drew our attention, the Common (Jack) Snipe, always seen in

pairs, IS similar to ours apart from the yellow rump, The Seed Snipe, however, looks more like a Grouse in shape, short stubby beak and grey/white underparts.

We had a few sightings of Duck and Plover, but many more of Moorhen, even over Sooum, and Common Gallhole on wet lands. The most

stunning of our sightings, though, was a White Necked Heron, standing stock still in a mirrored surfaced pool, the reflection so brilliant and perfect, Most lakes are now stocked with trout, something we not only saw but ate.

Flocks of Spotted Tinamou, with features similar to our Ptarmigan, were spotted and many more birds, too many to relate and all at incredible heights. We never did find out where they roosted.



Excursions:

Various excursions were made while we were getting used to operating at altitude and after the main part of the expedition.

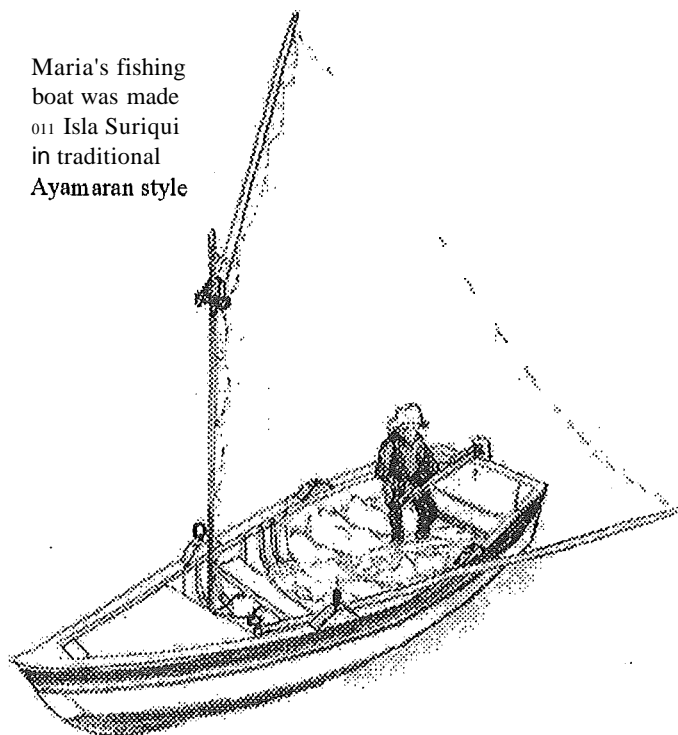
Sailing on Titicaca

Michael Smith

Once you have been to Machu Picchu, it appears, you are reluctant to return lest on the second seeing it does not match that perfect memory from the first time. Well that is one theory to explain why Ian Crowther, and I left the others to their dash into Peru to see the famous ruins before anyone had a chance to erect the proposed cable car. We were joined, thankfully, by David Hick, who was heading for Peru later, and together we decided to relax somewhere near Lake Titicaca, only an hour's drive from La Paz.

We had considered lounging in Sorata below the Illampu-Ancochuma massif but our guide, Jose, vetoed that as too low for adequate acclimatisation for later climbing. Considering it a bit of a long-shot I asked Jose if he could hire a boat for sailing on the Lake. A few weeks before leaving the UK we were resigned to visiting a few ruins and taking a commercial trip to Isla del Sol as Jose's enquiries had drawn a blank. Owners at the sailing club were reluctant to allow precious craft out of their control. Then I mentioned that we were not wanting anything flash and would be happy to have a local sailor along as a guide or guard. Almost by return of e-mail, Jose had arranged for four days sailing in the

Maria's fishing boat was made on Isla Suriqui in traditional Ayamaran style



fishing boat of Mario Quespe Mendosa of Isla del Sol for just \$150. Suddenly we were all looking forward to the acclimatisation period. This was greeted with scepticism in my family as they are all too aware of what a lousy sailor I am - seasick in the slightest swell.

The reality lived up to expectation though there was probably as much rowing as sailing since the wind dropped for long periods during the middle of the day. Mario's boat was about six metres long and typical of the local fishing boats. The mast was set well forward and extended by a long gaff that, together with a boom which extended well aft of the stem, allowed a vast area of sail to be rigged. The sail gaped untidily at the foot of the mast as the fore end of the boom was not resting against the mast but was held in a loop of cord hanging from the gunwale. When changing tack the boom had to be manhandled to the opposite gunwale and relocated.



We joined Mario at Puerto Perez. He had intended to use the normal night breeze to get him from Isla del Sol to Puerto Perez, a distance it took us three days to sail. Unfortunately there was no wind either during that day or the night so he had to row the whole way. He did not, however, mention this until we got to know him well.

We stowed all the food, camping gear and me in the bottom of the boat and rowed out of the weedy shallows. Within a couple of hours we have found a breeze and tack gently through the cold water and colder thin air, to Suriqui. Boat building is going on everywhere and, straining our Spanish, we quiz the workers about their techniques. While they do build some totora reed boats mostly they work with wood brought up from the Yungas (the Amazonian side of the Cordillera Real) and all boats are painted in the same combination of white, red, green and black.

We camp by the shore close to the northern tip of the island and are visited by a family of pan'a, a blue-billed duck. After ten hours in a sleeping bag we are keen to make an early start so are up at first light, 6.30, breakfasted and on board by 8am to catch the early breeze.

This fails before we reach the Tiquina narrows and we take it in turns to row with David taking the lion's share.

Mario is quietly amused and slightly embarrassed that we insist on doing, as a holiday, what he does for work every day.

We gain some insight into Bolivia bureaucracy on arriving at the San Pedro side of the straight and Mario goes to the Harbourmaster's office. He is not there but might be at the other side and he is needed to stamp a copy of a thirty Boliviano permit allowing movement of the boat, with its cargo of gringos, from the lesser part of the lake, Huyñamarca, to the greater part, Chucuito. We row over to San Pablo and land beside the ferry barges waiting for the buses which arrive in diminishing numbers now the roads round the lake have improved. Stamped we row on north, pick up a breeze for a while then row again until 5.30. Mid afternoon I moved to sit on the bow and read. This was a mistake and I'm queasy by four so I retreat to the bottom.

Abruptly woken by Mario at 5.30 we are off just after six in the fresh wind making two knots at first rising to five or six. There is much nautical talk but I'm laid in the bottom reading when a wave slops over the side to give me a wetting. I sit up and peer over the gunwale. White tipped waves are almost a metre high while our freeboard is just half a metre. I am given a plastic sheet to put over me to keep me quiet.

Arriving at Mario's home port on Isla del Sol about 1.30, we head up the Inca Stairway and fill our water bottle at the Fuente del Inca. This is a gushing fountain which supposedly also has an outlet in Cuzco. We gain the spinal crest of the island, slowly on account of the altitude, and follow it north to knock off our first 4000m top. At 4032m it is a rocky hillock a couple of metres above a field. Much

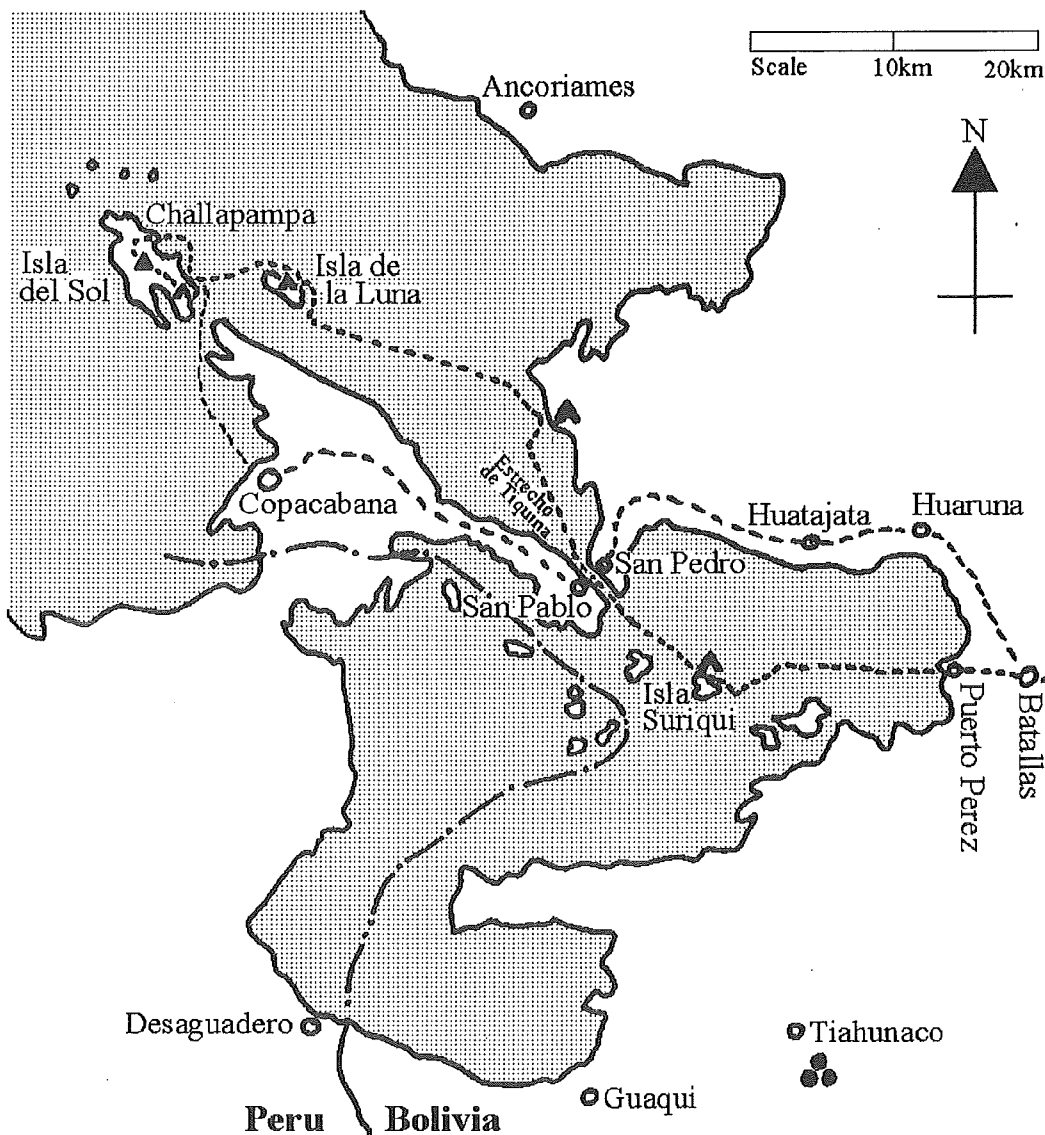
of the island is used to grow vegetables. Before us is spread out the whole length of the Cordillera Real and, way off to the left, the tips of the southern peaks of the Apolobamba. We are convinced that one is Cololo, the scene of our previous visit.

Mistakenly we descend into a bay too far to the north and have a dispiriting reascent to the ridge before the drop down steep slabs to Cha'llapampa and the museum (5 Bolivianos) of local Tiwanacu, Inca and colonial artefacts. Rather than walk back along the coastal trail we find a man with a motorboat willing to take us to back to the Inca stairway for 70 Bolivianos. This we readily accept rather than walk and only realise later how

ridiculously expensive it was.

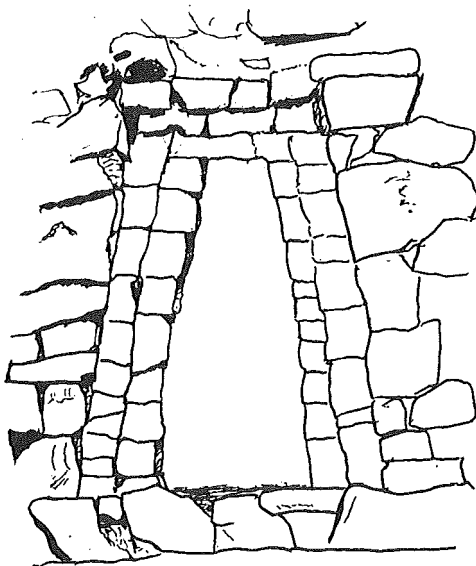
As darkness draws in we ask people the way to Mario's house - they all know the way - through a maze of paths between fields and houses. He has four rooms, a burro and sheep. In his specially swept courtyard flowers are growing. All four of us head off to a circular adobe restaurant which is opened for us and Titicaca trout (truchi) and salad are prepared for us as we drink beer looking across at snow covered Ancohumá.

We walk in the dark the few miles to the Pilko Kaina ruins, bring our gear up from the boat and camp by the Virgin's Palace - deserted. After watching the sun rise over Illampu,

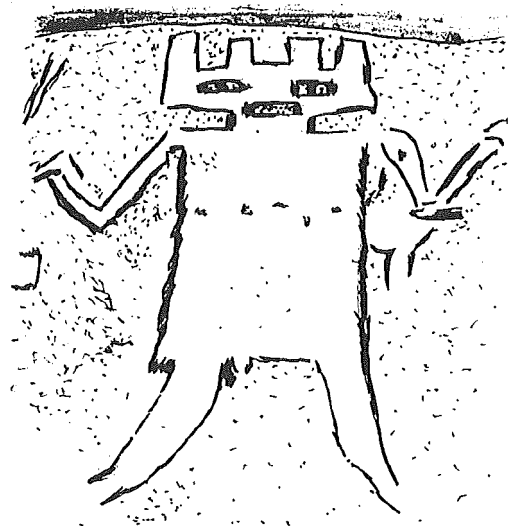


through the tent door, we pack our gear down to the jetty. Before a motor boat arrives to take us to Copacabana we have time to help beach a large boat and raise it on props.

The usual way back to La Paz would be through Peru but one of our party had not got his passport so we must go via Tiquina. There will be a bus in a few hours but we find a taxi in the plaza which, once we have feigned indifference by dozing on the wall, drops his price to half, \$35. On bald tyres we slip and slide to Tiquina where the driver decides he has had enough, leaves the taxi and takes us onto a ferry boat bluffing his way through the police passport checkpoint. We are packed onto a minibus, which already has a few locals on it, and instructed not to pay any more. It leaves immediately and we are given special treatment frequently being asked if we want to stop for photographs. We are dropped off at the terminus, El Cimetario, and take a radio taxi to reach the Hostal Naira about 4pm for a welcome shower.



Inca doorway on the Isla del Sol M. Smith



Petroglyphs and Geoglyphs

Michael Smith

Driving south along Chile's section of the Pan American Highway between Arica and Iquique can be tedious at times. The road has long straight sections through largely unchanging rocky desert. So when the opportunity for a short diversion presented itself we took it.

We stopped the four-wheel drive vehicle at Huara, a small town with many buildings resembling closed and dilapidated stores with boardwalks seen on western ghost town :film sets. Entering one open general store we stand between stacked furniture and bundles of alfalfa while our driver asks about petrol. Supplies appear in five litre open plastic canisters to be poured into the tank through an inverted two litre plastic soft-drink bottle with the bottom removed.

The next stop was for a coffee at a cafe which had a stuffed armadillo with a red ribbon tied around its head, by the till. Bolivia has a day when dogs and llamas are be-ribboned, Could this be the Chilean equivalent?

Refuelled and refreshed we headed east about ten' miles to the single hill rising from the flat desert, CelTO

Unita. There, high on the even southern slope, was an 86 metre tall geoglyph, a line-drawing of a person. It is supposed to be the largest archaeological representation of a human figure in the world. It consists of dark stones arranged on the lighter soil.

This is not the only such work in the area but it is the largest and most complicated.

Later, having crossed back over the Cordillera Occidental onto the altiplano we ask at Poopo town hall for directions to some rock carvings we have heard of. Rosa, the wife of an official is volunteered to act as our guide and attempting to make a good impression, interprets every feature of the local landscape for us.

After crossing the river while heading towards the co-operative mine, we go a kilometre along a new road up the narrow valley by the river. Stopping at a small adobe hut by a mine entrance we walk down a path which then contours upstream, crosses a small tributary then, almost at river level, a scree. Several metres up this scree are the remains of the petroglyphs. Most have been damaged recently by the mining company while creating the roadway.

Rhea, puma, humans and cameloids are represented. The shapes have been made by hammering with a



pointed tool. There are also geometric shapes, collections of dots and two shapes we could not identify, which resemble aircraft.



Approaching Oruro from the previous site we broke off and headed east a dozen or so kilometres to Calacala, a fenced in cliff site. About two metres above the base of the overhanging cliff were representations in white, black

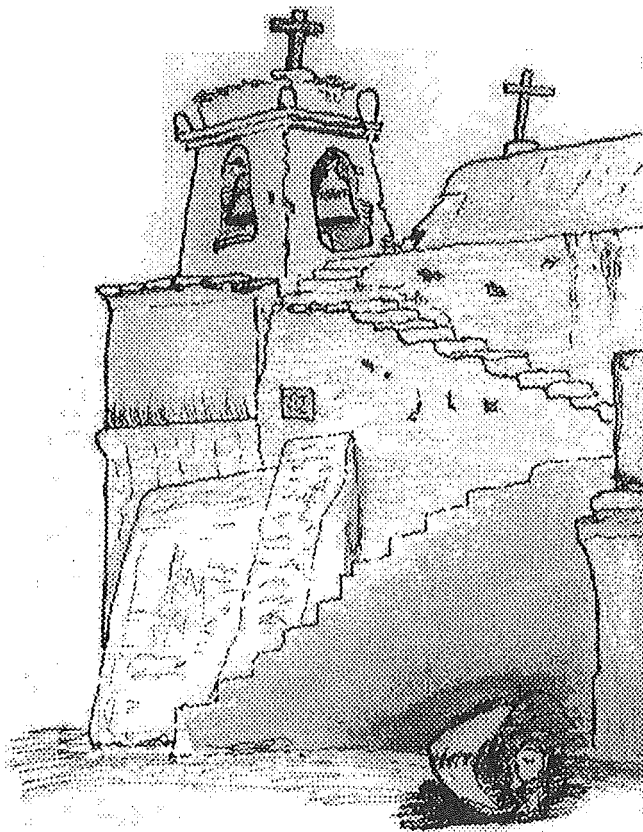
and red of cameloids, two of them are being held by humans. We were informed that these were probably of Wankarani origin placing them between 800BC and 400AD.



Calama to El Tatio, Chile

One of the big mistakes of the trip was the choice of the northern route from Calama to El Tatio to see the geysers. On the guidebook map [Biggar, p104] it looked logical as it was practically one side of a triangle rather than the two it would have taken via San Pedro de Atacama which we intended to visit later anyway. Also, on local maps, that one side had various braids and the northern one appeared to go closer to the mountains.

All started well with a picnic lunch in the shaded quiet plaza at Chiu Chiu by the whitewashed adobe church and Duncan finding new birds to photograph. Then Javier offered a pan of avocado and tuna leftovers to a couple of local girls but in the bustle of departure we forgot to recover the pan. That was half our kitchen equipment gone.



After Chiu Chiu (doesn't Bolivia have some wonderful sounding place names) the paved road ends and it is an unsurfaced track. Thoughtfully at the larger junctions in this scrubby desert with no habitations, the authorities have erected whitewashed adobe-covered brick-wall centred signs on which are painted a rough map of nearby villages and the tracks between them. We should have descended into Tonconce and taken the newer track to the south of El Tatio but to the north were attractive crags and the maps showed a track which appeared to avoid descending onto the canyon containing Tonconce.

As far as the crags the road was fine and we saw viscacha, vicuna and tall cactus. A right at a T junction and we were skirting below the crags with views down over a ribbed rocky plain cut by a deep canyon. By now the road was closely following an ancient waterpipe over rough terrain, so closely that we deduced that it was a maintenance road for the now apparently disused pipe. Our speed fell to a few kilometres an hour as the track became steeper, narrower, looser, boulder strewn and cut by streams. Rafael gave heavily loaded glances but coped masterfully using four-wheel-drive to link together ribbons of gravel and vegetation into a route across a fast flowing stream. We cleared the bigger boulders on narrow sections and watched the hours pass - this would be almost impossible in the dark.

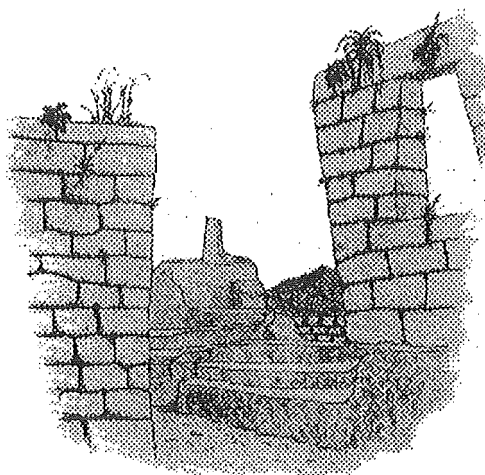
Arriving at Linzor at six we find that it is a one bicycle, one man, one house, two dog place with the function of looking after the reservoir.

The man is amazed that we have arrived this way and promises us that the road out to El Tatio is better and only 25km long. Surely it didn't look that far on the map. With half an hour before sunset and only a short tropical twilight we make haste east. Then we discover why it is 25km the road twists round contouring and heading west at times. There were a few more boulders to move but we arrive, in the dark, after an hour. We knew we had arrived when crossing a stream there was steaming water bubbling out of the ground by the side of the vehicle. We crept forward a little onto more solid ground, find a track and follow it until stopped by a column of steam passing through our headlight beam and rising hundreds of metres in the moonlight. It was time to camp as we need a pre-dawn start.

The view at first light could have been from a Star Wars set. In the coldest temperatures of the day (-14°C) columns of steam rose higher than ever and the small stream of scalding water produced a curtain of steam over 200m long and several metres high. We wandered around the few kilometres of geysers finding different types. A metre tall column had steam spluttering from the top. Pools had springs that gushed up almost a metre then settled back to a rolling flow. Sulphurous pools were rimmed with red, brown, yellow and white streaks. Rusting away at the northern end was the remains of a steam engine where someone had attempted to tap this seemingly infinite supply of energy.

All too soon, dozens of vehicles arrived from San Pedro de Atacama bringing trippers and breakfast tables. Some boiled their eggs in the hot water while others bathed in prepared pools. At this point we decamped and departed,

Cuzco and the sacred valley



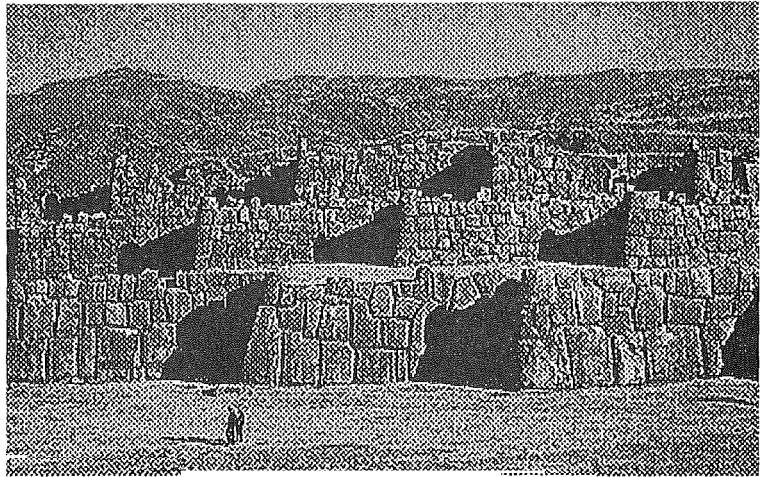
Two Innocents Abroad

Tim Josephy

Dawn in Cusco. Both Duncan and I are awake in our hotel room listening to the chorus of car horns without which Peruvian traffic is unable to proceed. Nothing for it but to get up and about and see what's to see. In the main square, an army of cleaners is just finishing the mammoth task of clearing up after last night's revelries (it is Inti Raman, an Inca festival which seems to involve a solid week of drinking, dancing and music). No other pedestrians are about and we can view in peace the magnificent cathedrals and the Spanish colonial buildings atop their massive Inca foundations. About 500ft above the square are two hills, one crowned with a statue of Jesus and the other with a cross. We decide to test our total lack of acclimatisation and climb up there.

The way takes us up narrow stepped alleys, between white painted terraces of houses to a church courtyard where workmen, even at this early hour are rebuilding an Inca wall from a pile of numbered blocks. Climbing on, both of us pretending we are not in the last stages of collapse, we suddenly break out into a huge area of ruins. Surrounding the hilltop, the temple of

Saqsaywaman is one of the finest remnants of Inca building to be found. Wandering around the massive walls and doorways, we fall into conversation with the only other person around, a Brit and Inca nut who spends half of each year out there. We get the guided tour, and on our way back to the hotel for breakfast,



Saqsaywaman's impressive Inca foundations overlook Cuzco and are dominated by a three tiered zig-zag wall about 700m long built from huge stones which fit together perfectly.

Mike offers to show us around for the day. Climbing once again out of the city, we visit the ruins of Q'enqo, an area of limestone outcrops covered in carvings of animals, much mutilated by the Spanish invaders. Further on, in a large crag split by natural fissures, we explore the Temple of the Moon, a modified cave with carvings of snakes and pumas and with an altar lit by a skylight. All rather Indiana Jones! Out in the sunshine again we follow an ancient highway up through terraced fields and over a low pass. Grotesque cacti and the variety of songbirds are a reminder that despite the height, we are in a tropical country.

Eventually we reach an Indian village, where women and children are laying potatoes out to dry. The tiny thatched adobe huts look as if they haven't changed for a thousand years until one notices the incongruous looking electrical supplies going into the roofs. Black pigs wander in and out of the doorways and when Duncan gives a grubby little urchin a coin to take his photo, every child in the village rushes to line up, complete with sundry dogs and cats. Mike ducks into a black doorway, inside which is a tiny shop, presided over by a charming lady with an enormous smile. We consume bottles of sickly fizzy drinks and go on

our way accompanied by more smiles and good wishes. Not far above the village, we reach the road from Cusco to Pisac, where we wait for a "micro", one of the ubiquitous mini buses that are the principal form of transport hereabouts.

The first micro to arrive, with seats for about twenty, has at least forty on board. No self-respecting rush hour tube traveller would even consider it, but the conductor jumps off and thrusts us in. The next 20 minutes are to be among the most terrifying I can remember. The road drops about 3000ft in a series of steep hairpins, the shininess of the tarmac matched only by the shininess of the tyres. The driver is clearly on a time bonus and believes the whole road is his. As we squeal round a corner on the wrong side of the road, Duncan mutters about taking a taxi next time. A girl next to us speaks a bit of English and relays his comment to the passengers, who dissolve in gales of laughter. "Taxi drivers are dangerous" she says, "stick with the bus!"

Pisac is a strange mixture. On the tourist trail, it has its fair share of tawdry souvenir shops but on the other hand it is still an ancient market town carrying on its trade much as it

has done for centuries. We visit a shop owned by the mayor, who sidelines in grave robbing. His back room is full of artefacts way beyond our price range so we make polite excuses and leave. High above the town is a craggy limestone mountain whereon is a large Inca city. We are too late to walk up so we accept the offer of a taxi. The driver demands payment in advance so he can buy a few pints of petrol. Having shifted a large sow from the road and convinced a cow to relinquish its scratching post on the petrol pump, we complete the refuel and set off up the hill. Considering the total lack of clutch and brakes, the driver does a great job of negotiating the hairpins but Duncan and I have already decided that, approaching darkness or not, we are definitely walking down.

Inca Pisac is magnificent. The surrounding hills are splendidly terraced and the city itself covers the mountain top and spills down the sides. We follow a narrow path across a cliff and through a low tunnel to a col, above which a large cliff face, pocked with holes, contains the graves of hundreds of Incas. We follow a path down, past well preserved buildings and dry fountains towards the terracing below. In the gathering dusk, with the lights of Pisac still looft below, it is a magical place. We finally reach the bottom in full darkness and wait for the last micro home. Arriving in Cusco, we realise we have discovered the stress free way of travelling in South America always go uphill and at night!

Next day, on our return from a trip to Machu

Picchu (which is another story), we find the last night of Inti Raman in full swing. Tens of thousands pack the squares, listening to concerts, which are a strange mixture of rock and Pefias, the haunting pipe music made famous by countless wildlife documentaries. High above, the church we passed on the first morning is floodlit and I have the brilliant idea of going up there to take photos of the city below. In the dark the alleys look different and we are soon lost. No matter, we climb on until suddenly we realise the crowds have gone and we are alone apart from three figures following a short distance behind. We turn left, they turn left. We quicken our pace, so do they. One catches up and demands money. I am all prepared to hand over my life savings but Duncan is made of sterner stuff. He delivers a smart blow to the chin and we make a break. I don't know if Duncan is as frightened as me, but he makes a fine job of keeping up as we put Colin Jackson to shame, hurdling the alley steps down to the safety of the crowds below. Back in the square, light headed and breathless from our escapade, we reflect on our stupidity.

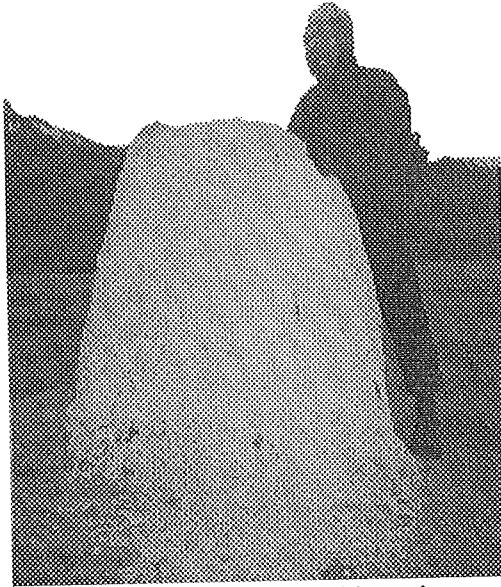
There's no fool like a pair of old fools!



Machu Picchu ruins from the top of Huayna Picchu peak. A member noted that "the countryside seen in Peru is the most picturesque I've seen anywhere, and deserves a return visit."

Pictures of an expedition

Just a few significant memories...



Duncan, at dawn, looking into a gently steaming geyser column wondering if it will gush.

El Alto and La Paz by night

El Alto is a rapidly expanding city on the plateau above La Paz. A combination of dirt roads in terrible condition and heavy traffic with rules of the "no biting, gouging or kicking" variety make El Alto by night a badly-lit Breughel Hell. As you drop down off the plateau, La Paz, a city in an immense canyon, appears as an enormous spider's web of lights -- a surprisingly moving experience.

Alan Linford

I remember Alan at 20000ft struggling towards an impossible summit in a 40km/h wind. When asked to stop because of time and conditions, he turned back without a murmur. The next day I saw him slowly doing the backstroke in a natural hot-spring pool, eyes closed, and a grin that stretched from ear to ear. It isn't just summits that matter, it's the whole trip. Rory

The Puma

Everybody wanted to see a puma, and ideally to photograph one as proof of the encounter. The stuffed puma in the National Park office at Sajama village was too much of a temptation. Duncan and Michael eventually kidnapped it, posed it artistically in the scrub outside the office, and took its picture. Don't anybody tell Albert it's not a real one...

Languages

Duncan Mackay is sitting on a boulder, with Vicki the cook. She speaks Spanish and Quechuan. He speaks English and French (though he hasn't quite given up hope that French will turn into Spanish if spoken slowly and loudly). They are trying to identify birds from a picture book, using all four languages. Rather surprisingly, communication seems perfectly effective; point at bird, point at picture - who needs words?



The Atacama Desert, vast, barren and incredibly varied in terrain and colour. A wind-sculpted, balanced rock tempted Javier to solo up the left overhang.

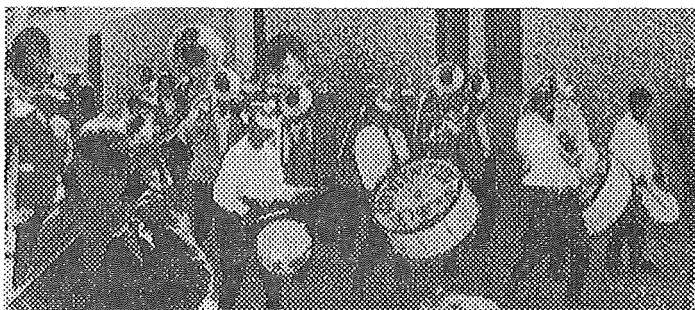
A Grand Day Out

Javier, our guide from Andean Summits, was a bit unsure about the climbing party's fitness and acclimatisation. He and Tim went for a nice day's climbing. The day involved an early start, an epic multi-pitch ascent of a new summit on loose rock, and an even more epic descent on even looser rock. Tim and Javier then found themselves some six miles of steep difficult going from base camp with an hour of daylight left. As usual, Tim had eaten about three raisins all day, which he believes is entirely adequate. Unfortunately he had catered for Javier on a similarly generous scale. When they arrived back in base camp, as darkness was falling, T00 was in good form and high spirits. Javier, arriving a few minutes later, croaked, "He made me RUN!" (all this having taken place at around 4500m). Later I saw Javier lying in a corner of the mess tent, eyes closed, trying to eat his supper but falling asleep between mouthfuls. The conclusion seemed to be that T00 at least was acclimatising quite well really.



Guiding the YRC

Our guides, after being with us for three weeks, got to know everyone well and got over their initial concern at this collection of mountaineers much older than their usual clients. They enjoyed not having to instruct us in the basics and could relax as we looked after one another rather than leaving it to our guides. They enjoyed the trips.



One of the several fiesta bands we came across on the altiplano

British Embassy

The British Embassy were supportive and interested in our venture. Making contact on arrival we were invited to a welcome lunch with embassy staff and Bernardo Guarachi. Maria Paz Campo was full of enthusiasm, helpful information and advice.

While some were visiting Sajama, Albert, Ian, David Atherton and newly arrived Christine Marriott were in La Paz and able to take up the Embassy's invitation to a reception for the Col. John Blashford-Snell Kota Mama Expedition. This was held at the Ambassador's house rather than the offices and allowed them to meet Ambassador Minter, who is a keen Rambler.

Cocapatan Huntsman

Late one afternoon a local chap with feathered hat, well worn jacket and the usual sandals came past our Willpanki camp carrying a .22 rifle. We engaged him in conversation and he explained that he was after viscacha or possibly puma. The latter had been responsible for taking llama over in the next valley.

His gun was well worn, obviously a much loved and treasured possession. The stock had been replaced with a rough cut version which was held onto the barrel by inert tube material straps stapled into place. We wished him good luck and provided a new plastic bag to hold his few precious rounds.

Conclusions:

Bolivia holds a store of opportunities for mountaineer at the club level including new areas. Age and lack of high-altitude experience proved not to be barriers. Indeed one of the main achievements was that of Iain topping Sajama on his first attempt at a large peak.

The Cordillera Real were good for trekking with enough to see each day to make it interesting. Weather was predominantly good and plenty of inviting mountaineering opportunities were passed on the route.

Exploratory climbing in the Cordillera Cocapata was encouraged by the shapely peaks but hampered by loose rock and inadequate anchors. There are more and steeper routes awaiting future visitors. For those seeking mountain walking or scrambling ample opportunities remain as we concentrated on one part of the range. The scarcity of previous visits, ease of access, local support and modest heights were advantageous features of this range.

The Quimsa Cruz were considered as an alternative to the Cordillera Cocapata when planning this expedition. Local guides confirmed the extensive possibilities in the northern parts of the Quimsa Cruz not only for climbing but also for attractive trekking off the usual route. However to include it in a list of seven of the "last great wildernesses" and describing it as "largely unexplored" (Gentleman, 1999) is probably hyperbole. From the tops of the peaks in the west of the Cocapata we could see the Quimsa Cruz and the area appeared attractive for mountaineer climbers.

The Cordillera Occidental offers mainly isolated peaks with little technical difficulty. There are innumerable unvisited lower crags and boulders. Their setting is spectacular though access is difficult on account of their isolation and long distances between habitations. The lack of water and support makes having a 4WD vehicle indispensable. Sajama is an exception in that the local infrastructure supports ascents by the normal route though it is essential to bring sufficient food.

A budding tourist industry based on San Pedro de Atacama in Chile and Uyuni in Bolivia operates multiday endurance-testing tours of the Atacama. Small hostels are emerging to service this trade though their amenities are minimal.

Comparing conditions with twenty years ago the improvement in the La Paz infrastructure and major roads (with the exception of El Alto, though roadworks are underway there) is striking. Supermarkets carry the full range of goods you would expect in an European small town; certainly sufficient to stock a basecamp. Simple well-made fleeces, sleeping bags, jackets, gloves, hats and the like are readily available from a number of stores round Sagarnaga at modest prices. Tents, ice axes and crampon can now be hired.

Petzel head torches were not available and, despite their domination of the market, our group ran into several problems due to inadequate or failing components. Three self-inflating air mattresses, of various types, developed leaks while those with closed-cell foam mattresses slept soundly. These too are available in La Paz. Heavy waterproof jackets were not worth carrying and lightweight windproof tops were invaluable.

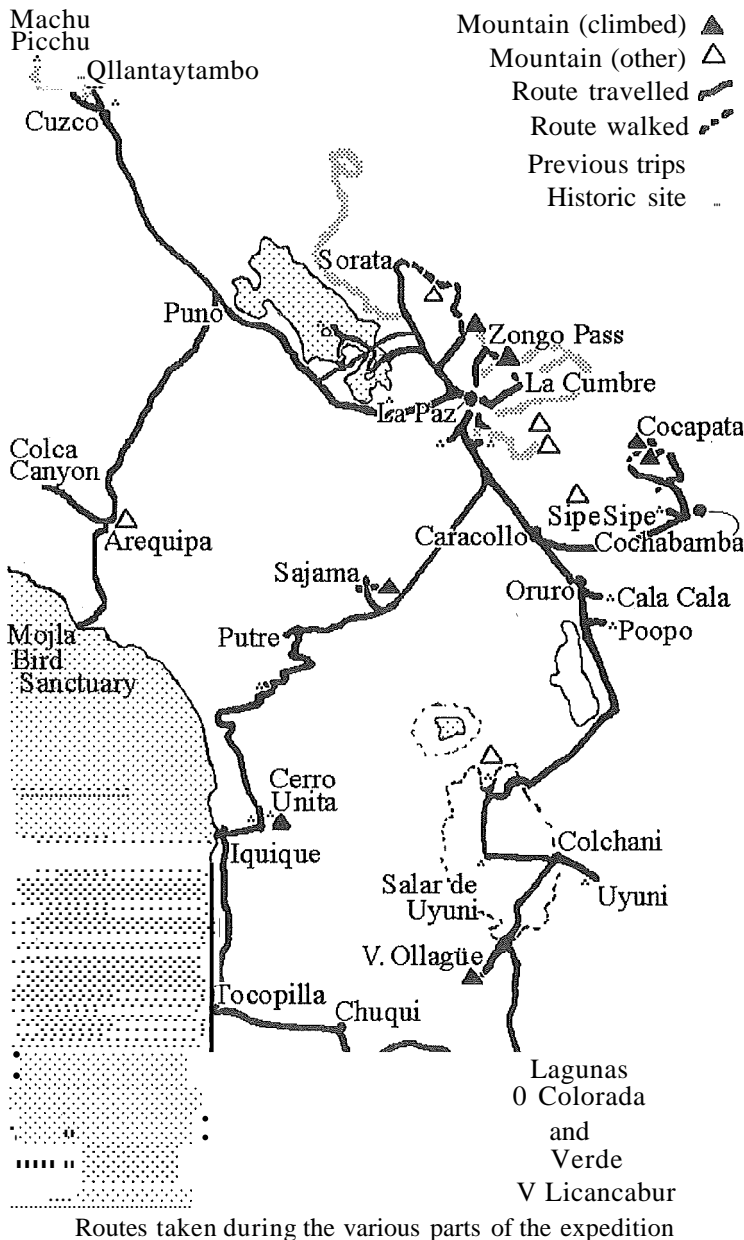
There are plenty of **firms** offering guiding services but good, experienced guides and cooks are at a premium. making contact and booking well in advance, being explicit about 'your requirements and expecting to pay a little more than the average rate pays dividends.

Communications have improved to the point where a mobile phone used on a peak has a good chance of making a connection. Using e-mail permitted negotiation during the planning phase and kept relatives back home informed of our progress once we were in South America.

A Polaroid camera and several packs of film were taken by the climbing party. They were used to take shots of the Cocapata range from the roads which lay to the south and the east during the drive in. These were of little use other than a general reminder of the outlines. This was partly because they were backlit, wide-angle and small, but also because we ended up climbing on the opposite faces to the ones photographed. We also took pictures of the villagers for their own use in return for their tolerance and assistance. Local people greatly appreciated their portraits so the outlay of around £50 was worthwhile. The early morning low temperatures increased developing times several fold.

The weather, both El Niño and La Niña notwithstanding, proved generally reliably stable, dry and sunny but cold. Very little time was wasted due to bad weather. The tropical twelve-hour day with twelve hours of darkness put a certain pressure on time during days out. Nights were often clear and ranged from -14°C in the mountains to +14°C on the coast.

Bolivia, Peru and Chile kept us well entertained and provided more than enough of a challenge. The Club is sure to return and take up some of the many remaining opportunities.



Achievements

The real achievement was that we worked together, with our Bolivian helpers, to enjoy some of the culture and geography of Bolivia, Peru and Chile. However, expeditions are also measured by their contribution to mountaineering achievement so a list of the new ascents in the Cordillera de Cocapata is given here.

Rock climbing routes:

Jatuncasa slabs, left-hand route, Hick & Josephy, 28 June, and central route, Smith & Thellache, 28 June. First ascents.

Willpanki I, south-west ridge, Josephy & Thellache, 1 July, first ascent, and II, south-west ridge, Smith & Hick, 2 July, new route.

Sankhayuni II, slab route, Camarlinghi & Josephy, 29 June, first ascent, and IV, Nido de Condores, Camarlinghi, Josephy & Smith, 7 July, first ascent.

New peaks or mountains:

Poma Apacheta I (also II) Newman, 6 July

Cerros del Lago Chuli Chulani I (also II and III), Mackay & Newman, 30 June

Pututuni I (also III, VI and IX?), Mackay & Newman, 4 July

Sankhayuni III (also III), Mackay & Newman, 1 July,

Malpaso I and II, Mackay & Newman, 3 July

Other peaks or mountains:

Sankhayuni I, Mackay & Newman, 1 July, probably Herzog's Incachaca

Also many other minor peaks.

Sajama was climbed to the summit by Camarlinghi, Gilmour, Josephy, Mackay and Newman on 14 July. Ventanani was climbed by A.Chapman, I.Crowther, I.Gilmour, A.Linford and F.D.Smith on 7 July.

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Mark Greenstock, Yuri and Jessica for current information on Cochabamba

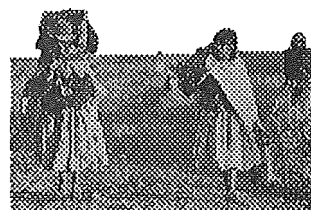
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Liz Nicholson for assistance in collecting local information

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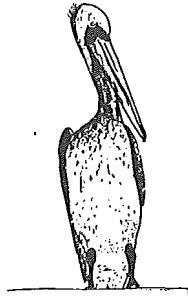
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Condoriri



Guarachi's Everest

While in La Paz Albeit Chapman, Ian Crowther and Michael Smith were invited to lunch with

Bernardo Guarachi to catch up on news since our last visit in 1988 when Bernardo provided logistical support in the Apolobamba.

Bernardo presented the Club with a panorama of the Cordillera Real and was generously invited to his spacious new offices for coffee and a detailed discussion of our plans for the current trip.

The description of his ascent is compiled from articles by Roger Hamilton which appeared in IDBAmerica, July 1998, p15 and Chasqui, July 1998, p4.

At 5:55 a.m on May 26, Katmandu time, after almost having to concede defeat; Bernardo Guarachi, 43, placed the Bolivian flag on the summit of Mt. Everest. He was the first Bolivian and first native American to reach Everest's summit.

The expedition had not gone in a textbook fashion. After arriving in Nepal in late March, heavy snows kept Guarachi and a growing number of climbers tied to base camp. Guarachi spent the next two months conditioning himself with climbs to Camp II and III. "It was very, very frustrating for him," says David Atkinson, one of the organisers of the drive to fund Guarachi's attempt. "It took tremendous willpower and character just to spend two months under those conditions, living out of a tent, losing 10kg, so cut off from his family."

Then on May 19 the weather cleared, and Guarachi and 53 others set off up the Nepal side. But by the time they reached the Hillary Step, just 100 vertical metres from the summit, they had run out of rope and had to turn back.

Back at Camp IV, Guarachi's limited English caused him to misinterpret the plans of his group, and he returned to base camp. Then, realising his error, he did an about face and pushed straight through once more to Camp IV. On midnight of May 25, he set off a final time with a Singaporean group of climbers, making 3548m in 72 hours from base camp to the summit.

This was Guarachi's second Everest attempt. His first, in 1994, ended at 8180m in bad weather.

Guarachi was raised near the windswept Andean town of Patacamaya, where his father still tends the family herds of sheep and llamas, so he has spent much of his life above 5000m. As a guide, he has made more than 170 ascents of 6450m IDimani, overlooking La Paz. The most dramatic of these was in 1985, when he was hired by Eastern Airlines to locate the wreckage of an airliner that crashed on New Year's Day.

The plan to finance his second attempt was hatched during a 1996 climb up Illimani in which Guarachi guided Bolivian Vice-President Jorge Quiroga Ramirez and Bolivian Times publisher, Peter Mcfarren. They formed a group which raised \$33000.

On July 2nd Guarachi received the Condor de los Andes award, Bolivia's highest recognition, from President Hugo Banzer.

*Con amistad y mucho
afecto de Bernardo
para : amistad
león*

*Juan Luis B.
LP. 25.6.1999.*