

A MAP OF THE ANDES OF VENEZUELA

BY SIR DOUGLAS BUSK

THE history of the map should be made clear. I was asked in 1962 by our member, Marcel Kurz, to contribute an article to *The Mountain World* on the Venezuelan Andes with a map. The material was duly despatched a year later in haste to meet a deadline set by the new editor. Months later I was casually informed that it had been decided not to publish the article in the German edition and I found that Mr. Barnes, the English editor, had not even been told of the existence of the map. By the time this had been rescued from Zürich and crossed the Atlantic twice, it was too late for publication in the English edition. It has now been saved from oblivion by the Editor of the *Alpine Journal*. The year's delay has had at least the advantage that I have been able to redraw it at leisure and make corrections arising from later information.

As for general cartography, the Shell Company of Venezuela produce and keep up to date an excellent road map of Venezuela on a scale of 1:1,000,000.

The present map of the Sierra Nevada de Mérida is in no sense an original compilation. It is based on maps by Jahn (1912), Gunther (1939: *A. J.* 52. 80, 83), Vinci (1953: unpublished) and the Shell Company of Venezuela (1956: unpublished but available on application). There are wide divergencies between these. Personal observation and much questioning of helpful local inhabitants have been embodied in the present sketch map, the main advantage of which may be that it is on a much larger scale than those earlier produced, none of which were bigger than 1:100,000. Perhaps, therefore, it will be more profitable to the walker, climber and, incidentally, fisherman, for these Andean lakes and streams have been stocked with rainbow and brown trout. I hope that future visitors will correct the map and publish their results.

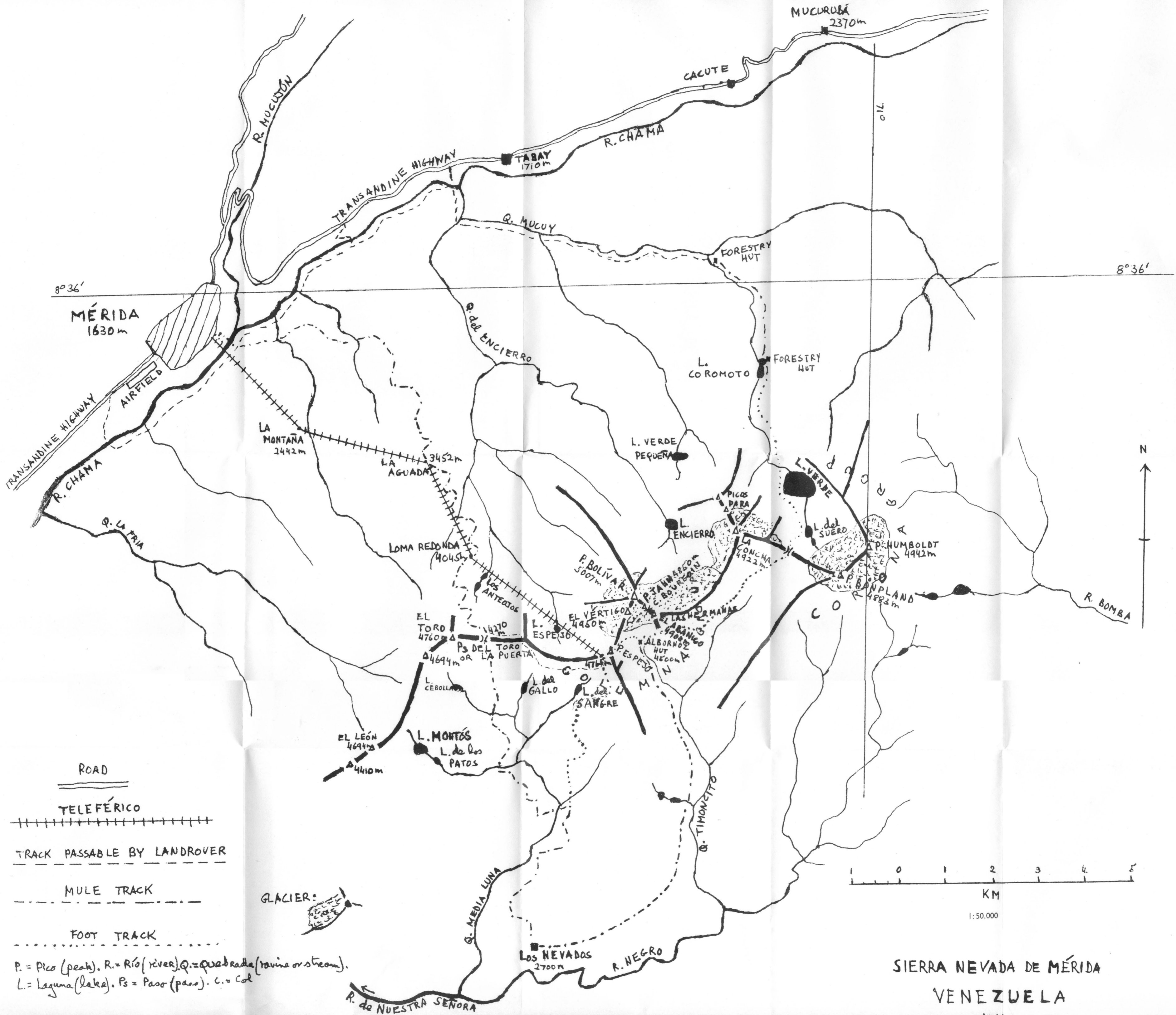
On the present map there are some new names adopted by Venezuelan climbers since Gunther's day.

The cables to the lower three stations of the *teleférico* are borne on pylons at irregular intervals. These are not marked on the map. From the third station to the top the cable is unsupported and rather reminiscent of the upper section of the Brévent *téléphérique* in the Aiguilles Rouges above Chamonix.

Names of glaciers have been omitted since, with the one exception of the Timoncito glacier—the most frequently visited—they do not seem

to be much used. Gunther's map records them all, based on Jahn. It should also be noted that all glaciers and snow-fields have been in retreat for many years—indeed some now hardly exist. Earlier photos can therefore be misleading.

All heights must be considered approximate. In particular, a dark suspicion always attaches to any height that is *just* over five, six, seven or eight thousand metres. Patriotic motives may have swayed the map-maker. It will be recalled that Aconcagua is no longer over 7,000 m. (*A. J.* 59. 463). The highest summit of Kibo (Kilimanjaro) simply had to exceed 6,000 m. during the reign of Kaiser Wilhelm; it is now 5,895 m. (see *A. J.* 64. 63, footnote). Similarly, while Mussolini was in power, the highest peak of Ethiopia, Ras Dashan, could not be allowed to be less than 5,000 m.; it is now some 4,600 m. (see *The Mountain World*, 1955, p. 221, and *A. J.* 61. 345). Pico Bolívar may ultimately suffer a like fate at the hands of some cruel realist.



P. = Pico (peak). R. = Río (river). Q. = Quebrada (ravine or stream).
 L. = Laguna (lake). Ps = Paso (pass). C. = Col

SIERRA NEVADA DE MÉRIDA
 VENEZUELA
 1964 DLB