

## INVITATION TO THE ANDES

By JOHN C. OBERLIN

*(Names of mountains printed in italic are unofficial.)*

**T**HE Scottish Himalayan Expedition and other similar small parties have stimulated the hopes and aroused the ambitions of young mountaineers, not only of Great Britain, but also of North America. It demonstrated that the right sort of amateur party with limited funds could nevertheless explore and climb in a remote region with eminent satisfaction and success. Many are eager to follow the example. I suggest that the Andes of Peru may offer what they seek.

Peru is a magnificent country, bounded by the Pacific Ocean to the west but largely draining into the Atlantic. This apparent anomaly is due to the extensive series of mountain ranges relatively near the coast which rise above 20,000 ft. and separate the strip of dry coastal plain from the luxuriant forests of the Amazon basin. Most of the higher peaks are sheathed in snow and ice and many remain unclimbed despite the ready accessibility of their bases, for the simple reason that they are both difficult and dangerous. Other very large peaks, such as the volcano Coropuna (6,613 m.), offer no real problem other than their size. If the proper time of year is selected the weather is both comfortable and reliable, despite proximity to the equator, due to the effect of the cold Humboldt Current along the coast and to the altitude of the valleys from which the peaks are reached.

The Peruvians are friendly and most hospitable, and living and travel expenses are low. As the centre of the great Inca Empire and later of the most magnificent of the Spanish colonial domains, Peru abounds in gigantic ruined cities and temples, marvellous terraced hillsides, lovely churches and handsome towns. Lima well deserves her proud title, 'Queen City of the Pacific.' Great Indian fairs and fiestas are of frequent occurrence, all sorts of striking artifacts are for sale, and trains of llamas still troop along the trails and through the streets of the hill towns with loads upon their backs, guided by Indians wrapped in handwoven ponchos and wearing tasselled caps. Indeed, a major expense to any visitor is the amount of colour film exposed. 'Balsas' (boats of reeds, not balsa wood) ride Lake Titicaca where the Rainbow trout approach thirty pounds in weight and the *smallest* I saw taken was fifteen pounds.

Any mountaineering expedition to a distant land calls for careful advance planning, and Peru is no exception. If time is at a premium, the party will have to fly. Supplies and equipment will go by ship to Callao, the port of Lima, and arrangements should be made for them



to arrive at least one month before the climbers. Full particulars concerning the expedition should also be sent to the Embassy in Lima several months before arrival and an export-import company or customs broker retained to process the shipment through customs and have it ready for the climbers when they appear on the scene. The noted import firm of A. y F. Wiese, S.A., Edificio Wiese, Lima, was very helpful to our party, being reasonable in its charges and efficient in handling the involved paper-work necessary to apply for duty-free entry of supplies into the country. The Embassy must be in a position to assure the authorities that the expedition is bona fide and that the supplies are not for commercial purposes. Duties can be so high that the necessary effort to obtain a duty-free permit is well worth while.

There is excellent air service throughout Peru supplied by Cia. de Aviacion Faucett, S.A., and this is the best way to reach Cuzco or Arequipa, for example. Good and cheap trucking service is available in one day from Lima to the Cordillera Blanca and the party may sometimes also ride the truck or may obtain transportation by automobile or station-wagon (*camionetta*). To the extent possible, reservations should be made in advance. One may also drive from Lima to Cuzco in about three days but this has the drawback that mountain climbing may thereafter seem relatively tame. If Huagoruncho or neighbouring peaks are the objective one may leave Lima by full gauge railroad in the morning and by early afternoon be travelling at 15,800 ft. before reaching Oroya and transferring to the Cerro de Pasco line.

A far from complete but selected bibliography is appended and I strongly urge that anyone interested do as much reading as possible. A thorough grounding in the history, topography and flora of the region will be of practical use as well as adding much to the interest of the trip. It is difficult to obtain much information on the spot. Similarly, some knowledge of Spanish is almost essential and a few words of Quechua Indian are useful.

The Peruvian government has constructed a tourist hotel in each of the principal cities except Lima. These are pleasant and comfortable and quite inexpensive. The principal hotels in Lima are the 'Crillon' and the Gran Hotel Bolivar but there are a number of less expensive hotels and pensions. Near Huaras is the Hotel Monterrey with its exceedingly hot spring and pools (and safe iced drinks, the ice being brought down from a glacier high above) and there is also a good new hotel in Huaras. In Yungay the Hotel Comercio is probably the best but is definitely not a tourist hotel.

In a few places, notably the Cordillera Blanca, there are Indian porters with a certain amount of alpine training. The best of them carry simply prodigious loads at high speed up all sorts of rough terrain including snow and ice and are eager for the success of the climbing party. They earn about 30 soles per day (12 shillings) where an ordinary porter suitable for trail and valley trips earns half as much. Burros are used in the Cordillera Blanca to pack in to base camp (at 20 to 50 soles per day) but mules and horses are generally used elsewhere. Good riding



horses and mules are also obtainable and probably desirable for the unacclimatised climber *en route* to base camp which may be at 13,000–15,000 ft. Sr. Cesar Morales Arnao of Huaras, active in the Grupo Andinista Cordillera Blanca, speaks English and has been very friendly and helpful in arranging for porters and burros in the Cordillera Blanca. Since there is no large tourist business, however, all such arrangements are special and it is difficult to keep to schedule unless a Spanish-speaking member of the party arrives ahead of time and carefully confirms all details. Two burro packers of Yungay are Pablo Vasquez and Alfredo Blanco, the latter being especially efficient. Our four excellent mountain porters were Eliseo Vargas, Miguel Flores, Eugenio Angeles, and Felipe Mautino, all engaged with the aid of Sr. Morales. Other mountain porters of this region having expedition experience are Macario Angeles and Fortunato Mautino.

Encourage the porters to bring their bamboo flutes with them as their strange and lovely melodies are particularly pleasant when whiling away the long dark tropical evenings. And have them take you to a purveyor of native fireworks to lay in a small stock so that you may have an occasional fiesta in the mountains to celebrate some new ascent or holiday. They are especially delighted with bamboo sky-rockets which you should let them ignite (they are tossed from the hand) while you peer from behind a nearby boulder.

It is convenient to have the Embassy forward mail to a hotel or care of the Guardia Civil at the town nearest base camp where a porter may be sent down occasionally to pick it up. Funds are best taken in the form of traveller's cheques of fairly small denomination and even these should be converted into soles in Lima or some other major city or difficulty may be encountered.

Staples such as sugar, salt, noodles, and kancha (maize) are readily procurable but you should bring most of your supplies with you. Although almost anything can be purchased in Lima, imported foods are expensive. There is little firewood in the mountains so a considerable amount of petrol will be consumed. This is obtainable in Lima and should be asked for as *gasolina blanca*. Bring your own containers.

While the weather is generally reliable, one large tent for cooking and storage at base is very desirable as well as a tent for the porters. At 13,000 ft. the temperature may drop to about 25° F. at night. The porters will stand considerable crowding. Several large light-weight tarpaulins should also be brought. A good arrangement is to provide one porter for two climbers. Duffel bags are excellent for packing in to base camp and U.S. Army surplus plywood packboards with duffel bags lashed to them seem best for the porters who will also require a complete clothing outfit, goggles, ice-axes, boots (European sizes 41 and 42), crampons, and climbing rope. For the ordinary garden variety of porter who is not expected to go high or cross glaciers, on the other hand, very little is required. I have seen them remove their sandals when clearing trail over a snow-covered pass, apparently feeling more comfortable in their bare feet.



They should be given money to purchase their own food, maize, rice, potatoes, sugar, and salt but in some cases a little attention may be desirable to see that it is not spent on alcohol. A large stock of cigarettes and candy should be taken to be rationed out at the end of a hard day or on the trail. A little *aguardiente* (alcohol from sugar cane) may also be doled out occasionally. The really good porters do not chew coca leaves and look down on those who do.

Not being very far south of the equator, the nights last from 6 P.M. to 6 A.M. and they are cold. In fact, the moment the sun drops behind a ridge (perhaps 4.30 P.M. at base camp) a down jacket is the only real comfort and things soon freeze solid. Curiously enough, various plants are in full bloom and do not seem to mind being heated by day and frozen by night. The sun shines principally on the north sides of the peaks and routes should be chosen up such sides for both comfort and safety. The snow on the south side is usually deep, granular, and loose. All cornices are dangerous here and the greatest of care should be taken to avoid them. They are often huge and have been the source of several serious accidents. Snow and ice avalanches are also of quite large dimensions. The months of June, July and August are most suitable for mountaineering, the weather usually being quite settled and reliable except in the case of those peaks very near the Amazon basin.

I have yet to see a snake in the mountains of Peru and there are few flies and mosquitoes. While there is an occasional story of a marauding puma, the chief danger seems to be sunburn.

From four to eight members would seem to be best for a climbing party and it is a good idea to include a doctor if possible, particularly if going into more remote country. In addition to the possibility of accident there is a likelihood of various internal disorders which may be minimised if due precautions are taken. A good supply of paregoric and of an antibiotic should be on hand. The water is generally not safe to drink until base camp is reached but bottled mineral water and soft drinks, good beer and wines are available everywhere. Uncooked vegetables, salads, dairy products, and the like should be avoided.

A Logan tent, sleeping four, and procurable from Woods Manufacturing Company, Limited, 200 Laurier Hill, Ottawa, Ontario, Canada (cost \$72.00) is excellent and greatly facilitates cooking on the mountain as well as serving as an evening clubhouse. It weighs about fifteen pounds and eight persons can crowd into it in the long dark evenings. The other tents should be rugged two-man high-altitude tents which may weigh from about four to seven pounds, complete. Boots should be large and warm but suitable for crampons and gaiters of the Tricouni type are desirable for deep snow. A supply of marker wands is well worth while to serve as a guide in case of storm but more especially to mark a safe route for porters. Two or three camps will be needed on most of the larger peaks and in some cases it is an advantage to have an advance party explore and mark the way one day before the remainder of the party follows. While there is plenty of snow and ice on the higher peaks, there are few true valley glaciers and these are receding rapidly.





*Photo, Dr. George I. Bell.]*

CHACRARAJU (LOWER PEAK SEEN FROM SOUTH-EAST RIDGE). UNCLIMBED.

*[To face p. 72.]*

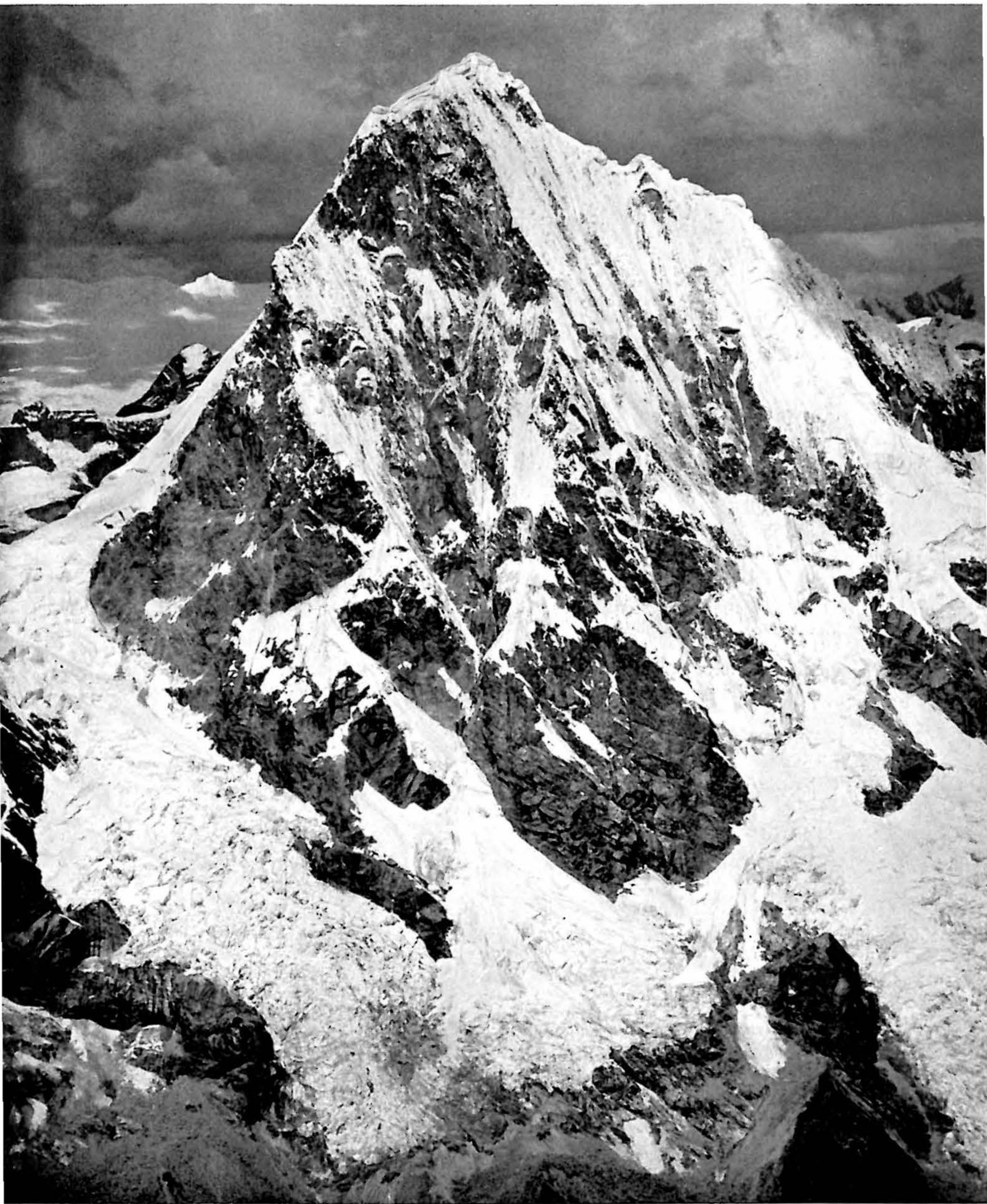


*Photo, Fred D. Ayres.]*

THE PYRAMID (SEEN FROM NÉVÉ PLATEAU BETWEEN EAST HUANDOX  
AND PICCO) IN THE MOUNTAINS



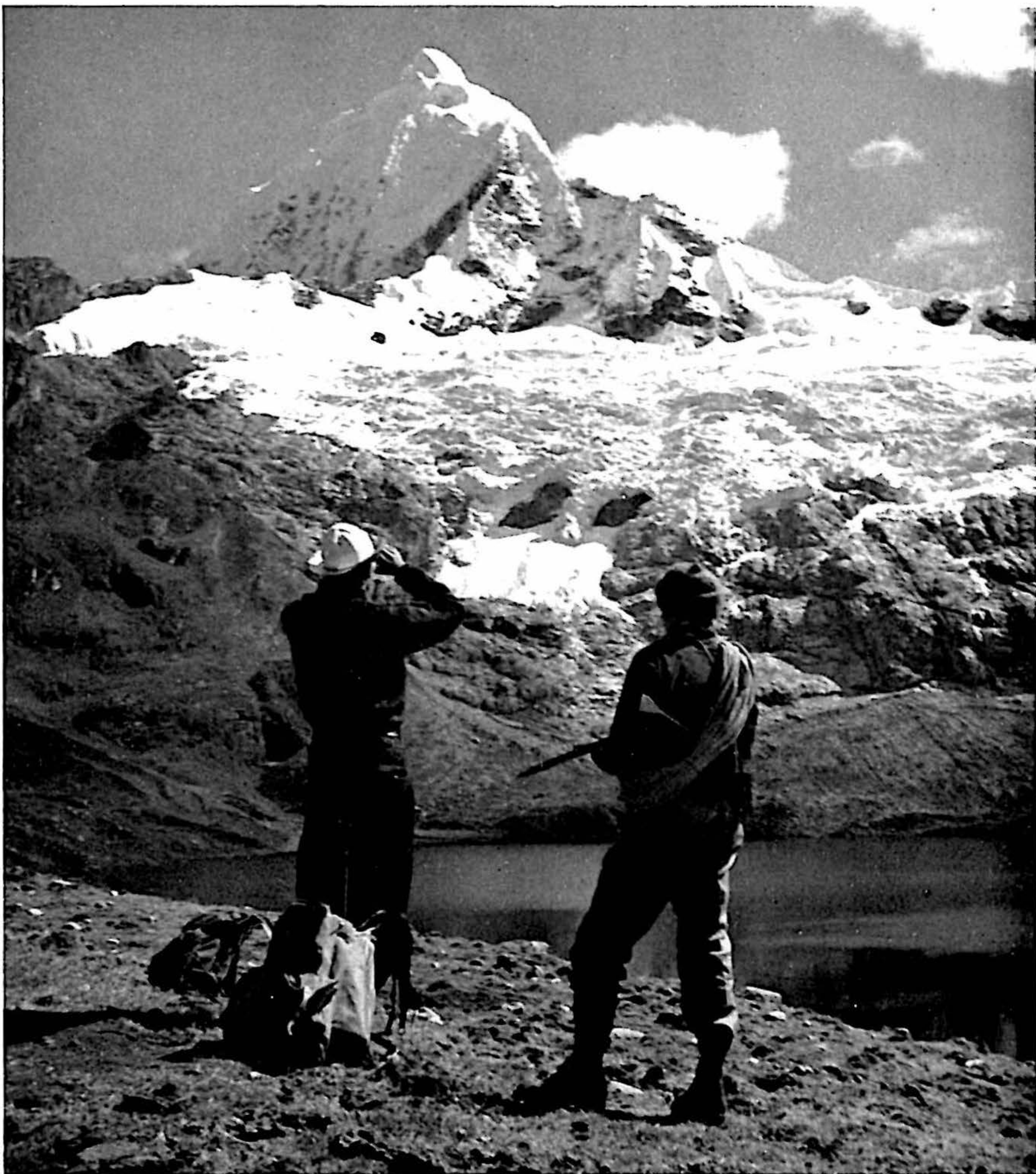




*Photo, Leigh Ortenburger.]*

PEAK 19,275 FT. RISING ABOVE QUEBRADA ULTA, CORDILLERA BLANCA, PERU.

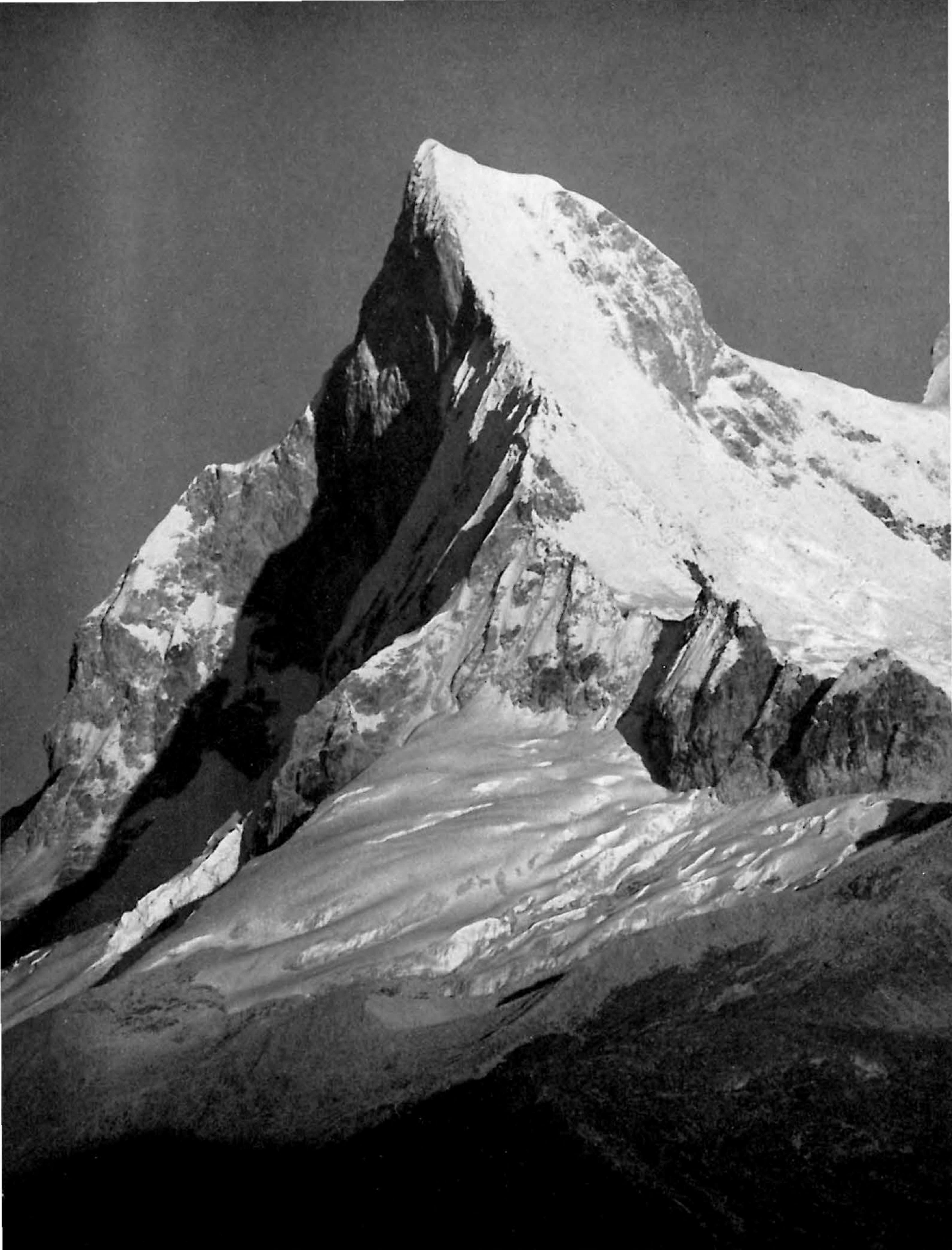




*Photo, Andrew J. Kauffman, 2nd.]*

**HUAGORUNCHO, NEAR CERRO DE PASCO. THIS PEAK OF 5,748 M. HAS NOT BEEN CLIMBED.**





*Photo, Leigh Ortenburger.]*

SOUTH PEAK OF HUANDOY, 20,210 FT. ; TELEPHOTO FROM EAST.





*Photo, Fred D. Ayres.]*

TAVLIRAJU (UNCIMBED) FROM NEAR PUNTA UNION.

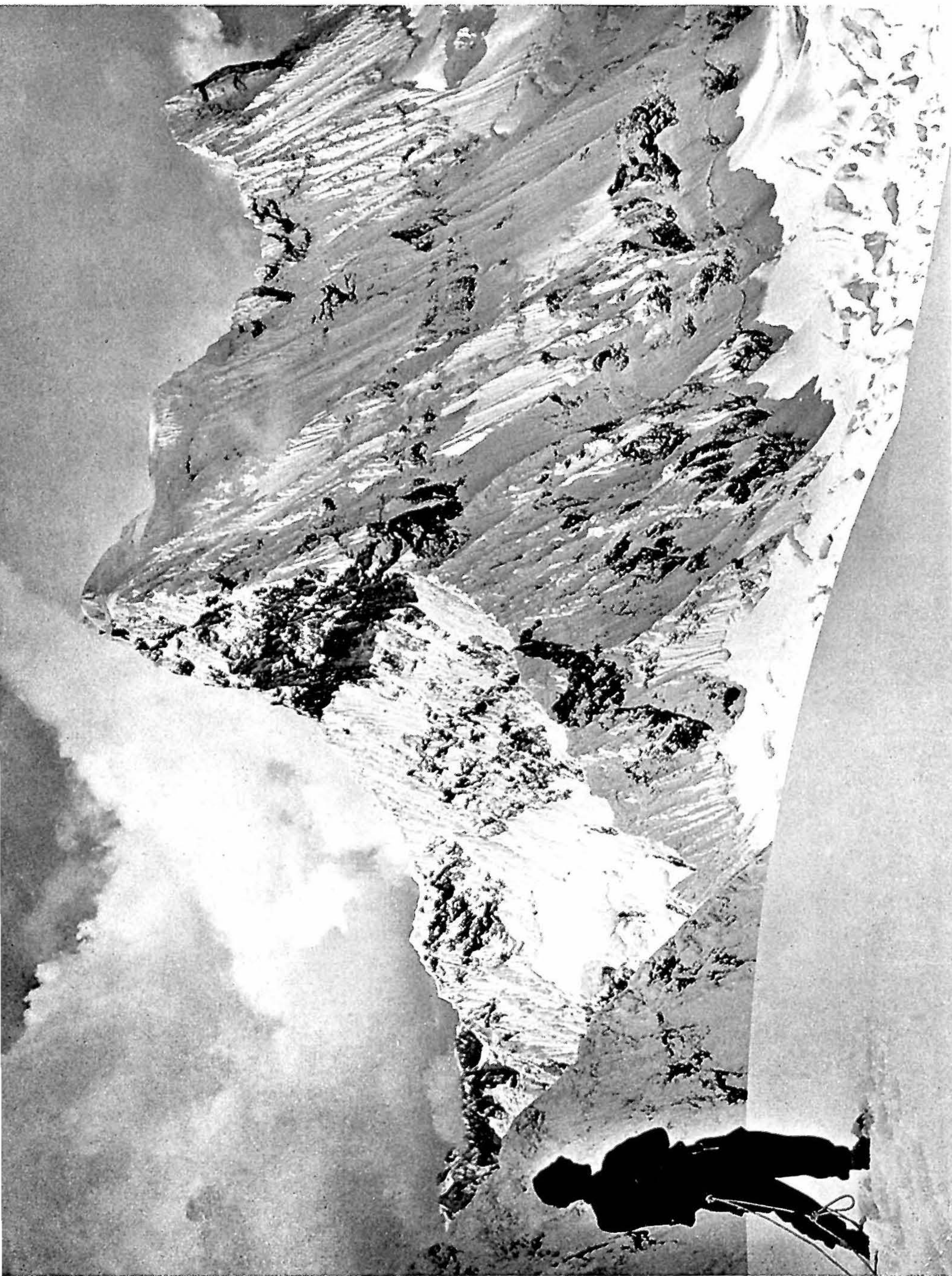




*Photo, Leigh Orienburger.]*

AERIAL VIEW OF CORDILLERA HUAYHUASH. L. TO R. : JIRISHANCA, YERUPAJA  
CHICO, YERUPAJA, RASSAC (DIRECTLY IN FRONT OF YERUPAJA), AND SIULA.





*Photo, Leigh Ortenburger.]*

CHACRARAJU FROM SUMMIT OF PISCO.



*The Cordillera Blanca*

This range is undoubtedly the most suitable for a first trip to Peru, being readily accessible from the Santa valley after a somewhat strenuous one-day drive from Lima. There are a number of side valleys leading directly into the range, the best known being the Quebrada Yanganuco, the entrance to which is flanked by Huascaran (6,768 m. and 6,655 m.) to the south and the Huandoy to the north. A fine trail from Yungay leads up this valley and over the range, and base camp in the upper valley can be reached in one day. Surrounding the head of the valley and accessible from a single base camp are the three principal Huandoy peaks (nearly 6,400 m.), East Huandoy (6,100 m.), *Pisco* (5,850 m.), *Pisco East* (5,860 m.), Chacaraju (W. Pk. 6,100 m., E. Pk. 6,050 m.), Yanapaccha (5,460 m.) and Chopicalqui (6,400 m.). The twin summits of Huascaran have been ascended only from the west. Most of this group of mountains have been climbed once or twice with the exception of the South Pk. of Huandoy (6,160 m.) and the incredible Chacaraju which will apparently require siege or suicide, or perhaps both, if its summit is ever to be reached.

Following the trail over the pass (Portachuelo de Yanganuco) to Huaripampa, you may go up the valley toward Punta Union to the foot of unclimbed Taulliraju (5,830 m.) where you can test your own theory of a plausible route. I have none in particular.

From Caras, the next town north of Yungay on the highway, one may enter the Quebrada Parron with its large lake and spectacular views. The elegant peak of Artesonraju (6,025 m.) at its head was, however, ascended from the Quebrada Santa Cruz, the next valley to the north, through which goes the trail to the pass of Punta Union. Quebrada Parron gives access to the *Pyramid* (5,885 m.), Nevado Carás (6,025 m.), and Aguja Nevada (5,886 m.). Quebrada Santa Cruz leads to Taulliraju (5,830 m.), but Alpamayo (6,120 m.) and Quitaraju (6,100 m.) were approached by the French from the north via Quebrada Alpamayo. Nevado Santa Cruz (6,259 m.) was also climbed by the Austrians from this same valley. Pucahirca S. (6,100 m.) was approached across the Jancapampa glacier and climbed by the south ridge. The remaining unclimbed Pucahirca summits look difficult.

Huaras, the capital of the department of Ancash, is near Huantsan (6,395 m.), a peak Lionel Terray found a worthy adversary, but the approach to this peak is rather roundabout. Padre Soriano is in charge of the interesting Archaeological Museum in Huaras and has been most helpful on occasion although he speaks no English. The nearby Hotel Monterrey with its hot spring is a good place to relax after a few weeks in the mountains.

Between Huantsan and Huascaran lie the peaks of Nevado Chinchey (6,222 m.), Ranrapalca (6,162 m.), Palcaraju (6,110 m.), Toccliaraju (6,032 m.), Nevado de Copa (6,173 m. and 6,203 m.), and Nevado Contrahierbas (6,036 m.) which were all scaled by the Austrians. They are surrounded by unclimbed lesser peaks some of which are of considerable interest.



Anyone interested in the Cordillera Blanca should, as a first step, procure a copy of the book, *Cordillera Blanca*, by H. Kinzl and E.



Schneider, which contains an excellent map of the region as well as a marvellous collection of photographs. The map cannot be relied upon in all details but is nevertheless extremely helpful.



The principal unclimbed peaks of the range are :

Taulliraju (5,830 m.)  
 Chacaraju (6,100 m. and 6,050 m.)  
 Huandoy, S. Pk. (6,160 m.)  
 Ajuga Nevada (5,886 m.)  
 Pucahirca N. (6,050 m.)  
 Pucahirca M. (6,010 m.)  
 Nevados de Caras (6,025 m. and 6,020 m.)  
 Pyramid (5,885 m.)  
 Ulta (5,875 m.) on south-east side of Quebrada Ulta.  
 Cayesh (5,721 m.)

### *Cordillera Huayhuash*

This range lies immediately to the south of the Cordillera Blanca and the same route of approach is followed from Lima until one reaches the pass of Conococha where a side road branches off to the right leading to the town of Chiquian. Two days by pack train will then see the alpinist to base camp.

The highest peak of the range, Yerupaja (6,634 m.), has been climbed but Jirishanca (6,126 m.), Yerupaja Chico (6,121 m.), and Rondoy (5,883 m.) are still a challenge. Indeed, Jirishanca has that 'impossible' look. Nevada Siula (6,356 m.), Sarapo (6,143 m.) and Nevado Rassac (6,040 m.) have been ascended by the Austrians, as have a number of the lesser peaks.

### *Lesser Ranges*

Further south are the massifs of Raura, Tunshu, Huarochiri and Huagoruncho, all of which may be approached by rail from Lima. Each has a special interest but undoubtedly Huagoruncho (5,748 m.) has achieved the greatest notoriety. Several attempts have been made on it without discovering any certain way to the top. Although below the 6,000 m. mark it will be a great prize. A narrow-gauge railway runs from Tambo del Sol, on the Cerro de Pasco Railway, to Huachón where mules may be obtained for the three-hour ride to Tarata at the foot of Huagoruncho.

### *Cordillera Vilcabamba*

A comfortable flight on a Faucett plane takes one over the Andes to Cuzco, former capital of the Inca Empire and as fascinating a town as one can hope to find. It's a good place to acclimatise, the elevation being 11,000 ft., and a week spent here is well repaid in other ways, particularly if one arrives in time to witness the Fiesta of Corpus Christi (approx. June 20) and the Inti Raymi pageant at the fortress of Sacsahuaman on the heights above (approx. June 24). Many excursions are worth taking to nearby towns and ruins such as Pisac, Urubamba, Ollantaytambo, Kenko, and Machu Picchu. Sr. Americo Luna of Incaland Tours speaks good English and is very helpful in obtaining



reliable drivers and arranging tours. Sr. Paul Flury, the Swiss manager of the Hotel Crillon in Lima, is an authority on the Cuzco area.

Salcantay (approx. 6,300 m.) is king of the Cordillera Vilcabamba and looks the part. It was climbed in 1952 with considerable difficulty and in 1954 two mountaineers lost their lives on its precipices, one being the redoubtable Kasperek of Eiger Nordwand fame. Its next-door neighbour, Pico Soray (5,950 m., sometimes called Humantay), while somewhat lower, appears rather more ferocious. In the background are Panta (5,670 m.), Soiroccocha (5,355 m.), and the twin summits of Pumasillo (6,246 m.)—while this name appears on maps there is some question whether it is correct; it is also called Yanama). One peak of Pumasillo appears quite easy but the other peaks named are obviously difficult problems. They are, moreover, relatively difficult to reach and generally somewhat mislocated on maps. Many very handsome mountains of the region are unnamed. Limatambo or Mollepata are the little villages from which the range is usually entered, being a comfortable day's drive from Cuzco on the main highway. It is also possible to ascend the Pampacahuana valley from the Machu Picchu railway. On the other side of the railway is the beautiful unclimbed peak of Veronica (6,134 m.).

### *Cordillera Vilcanota*

From the window of your room in Hotel Cuzco you may watch the alpenglow on the huge mass of Ausangate (6,153 m.) and as it fades you will reach for your sweater. The chill comes quickly at 11,000 ft.

This massif is reached with relatively little difficulty by road and trail. While Ausangate and several other peaks have now been climbed, a great many peaks of the area remain substantially unexplored. The German party which climbed Ausangate in 1953, also climbed Colque Cruz, Cayangate, Huayna-Ausangate, Campa I, Campa II, and Surimani. It may prove rather a problem to locate reliable porters in this area.

### *The Volcanoes*

Above Arequipa towers the cone of El Misti (5,842 m.) up which one may ride on a mule. Nearby Chachani (6,087 m.) is a bit more of a climb, and Coropuna (6,613 m.), Ampato (6,300 m.), and Solimana (6,323 m.) all require real expeditions to reach and ascend them. All of these larger volcanoes, however, have been climbed and none offers very great technical difficulty.

If you accept the invitation of the Andes of Peru you may glimpse the white spire of Salcantay from the rock-cut ruin of Machu Picchu far above the Urubamba Gorge, you may lean against a palm tree in the plaza of Yungay to look upward at the peaks of Huascaran and the Huandoys, and there is no end to the trail leading into those enticing mountains.



*Note on Bibliography*

The list of publications has intentionally been limited to those to which the interested reader should in any case refer. Some will be found to contain excellent photographs and maps as well as more detailed bibliographies for further investigation. Both the Jenks article and the Pierre book give brief descriptions of the main ranges and the latter also contains considerable useful advice as well as a Quechua vocabulary. The Quechua language as spoken in the Cordillera Blanca is, however, rather different from that of Cuzco. It is assumed that the cumulative indexes of the various mountaineering journals will be consulted as a matter of course.

Maps are something of a problem, although the Cordillera Blanca is relatively well covered. The climber will soon find that he is willy-nilly quite an explorer, even in this region. Many of the elevations given on the maps and mentioned above are only approximate.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

*General*

- PALMA, RICARDO, *Knights of the Cape*. Knopf, N.Y., 1945.  
 BINGHAM, HIRAM, *Inca Land*. Boston, 1922.  
 YBARRA, THOMAS R., *Lands of the Andes : Peru and Bolivia*. Coward-McCann, N.Y., 1947.  
 TOOR, FRANCES, *Three Worlds of Peru*. Crown Publishers, N.Y., 1949.  
 PRESCOTT, WM. H., *History of the Conquest of Peru*. The Modern Library, N.Y., 1936.  
 BENNETT, WENDELL C., and BIRD, JUNIUS B., *Andean Culture History*. American Museum of Natural History, N.Y., 1949.

*Mountains and Mountaineering*

- BORCHERS, PHILIPP, *Die Weisse Kordillere*. Berlin, 1935 (map).  
 HEIM, ARNOLD, *Wunderland Peru*. Verlag Hans Huber, Bern, 1948.  
 PIERRE, BERNARD, *La Conquête du Salcantay*. Amiot-Dumont, Paris, 1953.  
 KINZL, HANS and SCHNEIDER, ERWIN, *Cordillera Blanca*. Universitäts—Verlag Wagner, Innsbruck, 1950 (map).  
 JENKS, WILLIAM F., *Climbs in the High Andes of Peru*. American Alpine Journal, 1941, pp. 157-76.  
 KOGAN, GEORGES and LEININGER, NICOLE, *The Ascent of Alpamayo*. Harrap, 1954.  
 KOGAN, GEORGES and LEININGER, NICOLE, *Cordillère Blanche*. B. Arthaud, Paris, 1952.

## MAPS

- Map of Peru (obtainable at no cost from Esso Touring Service, Foreign Dept., 15 West 51st St., New York 19, New York).  
 Hispanic America, 1 : 1,000,000. American Geographical Society, Broadway at 156 St., New York, c. 1942. Sheets : Cerro de Pasco, Lima, Puno-Rio Beni. Index map available without charge.  
 Raimondi, A. Mappa del Peru, 1 : 500,000. Paris (1898).  
 World Aeronautical Chart, 1 : 1,000,000. U.S. Coast and Geodetic Survey, Commerce Dept., Washington 25, D.C., c. 1944. U.S.A.F. Catalog of Aeronautical Charts available without charge. Map sheets cost \$0.25 each.  
 Peru, 1 : 200,000. Carta Nacional. Servicio Geográfico del Ejército y Instituto Geográfico Militar. Lima, Peru. c. 1951. Incomplete.



Anden von Peru, Cordillera Blanca und Huayhuash, 1 : 300,000. Swiss Institute for Alpine Research, 1952.

Cordillera Blanca (Peru),<sup>1</sup> 1 : 200,000 Alpenverein, Innsbruck.

Cordillera Blanca (northern part),<sup>2</sup> 1 : 100,000. Alpenverein, Innsbruck.

Cordillera Blanca (southern part),<sup>2</sup> 1 : 100,000. Alpenverein, Innsbruck.

Cordillera de Huayhuash (Peru),<sup>2</sup> 1 : 50,000. Alpenverein, Innsbruck.

Ghiglione, P. Sud Peru. *Berge der Welt*, Vol. VI, 1951 (in back pocket).

<sup>1</sup> Available from Osterr. Alpenverein, Verwaltungsaussch, Innsbruck, Gilmstrasse 6/III, Austria.

Also contained in back pocket of the book, *Cordillera Blanca*, by Kinzl and Schneider.

<sup>2</sup> Available from *Peruvian Times*, Carabaya 928 ; Office 304 ; P.O. Box 531. Lima, Peru.

### IMPORTANT FIESTAS

(dates are approximate)

Date	Place	Fiesta
May 3	Everywhere	Day of the Holy Cross
May 15	Moche (near Trujillo)	Fiesta San Isidro
June 20	Cuzco	Corpus Christi
June 24	Cuzco	Inti Raymi
June 24-29	Lima	Amancaes
July 8	Huaylas	Fiesta Santa Isabel
July 16	Paucartambo	Fiesta Virgin of Carmen
	Pucara (Puno)	Pottery fair and races
July 24	Lampa	Dances
July 25	Lampa	Horse show
July 25	El Santiago (near Huancayo)	Indian cattle fair
July 28-30	Everywhere	National fiesta
August 1-7	Copacabana (Bolivia)	Fair, dances, religious festival
Every Sunday	Huancayo	Great street fair