# CLIMBS IN THE CORDILLERA VILCABAMBA

By BRIAN HEARFIELD

(*Six illustrations: nos. 13–18*)

On April 21, 1962, we slipped moorings from Wellington harbour, bound for Panama. Behind us lay the usual problems associated with sending seven men some 9,000 miles to climb in the Andes of Peru, and ahead of us lay—well, we weren't too sure just what, except that we were steaming towards a continent that is without doubt both a mountaineer's and a tourist's paradise. We were travelling to South America not only to answer a challenge of unclimbed mountains in south-eastern Peru, but also to visit the fascinating countries in this vast continent—a continent of tremendous social and geographic extremes, where the handiwork of civilisations 500 years dead can be compared with some of the boldest and most striking architecture of our day; so from our remote and insular land, we sailed forth with eager eyes.

Two members of the expedition,[1] Walsh and Farrell, had earlier travelled direct to Lima's maritime port of Callao with all expedition cargo and were at that time safeguarding its long, overland journey through to Cuzco and down the Vilcanota valley to the rail terminal at Huadquiña. The more fortunate five, Crawford, Furndorfler, Naylor, Mackay and myself, enjoyed a more leisurely tourist trip to Panama before flying south to Lima. After a few rather hectic days spent in this fascinating Peruvian capital, we continued southwards in a long, wearying bus journey along the desolate coastal strip to Arequipa, the second largest city in Peru. After miles of lifeless sand dunes it was most refreshing to alight at this pleasantly situated city with abundant grasslands and trees—made possible, no doubt, by its elevation of 7,500 ft., its abundant sunshine, and, most important of all, an adequate rainfall. We continued now by train on a two-day journey high up into the mountains to altitudes over 14,000 ft. across mile upon mile of the inhospitable altiplano, then descending slightly, to arrive at the ancient city of Cuzco nestled in among green-covered hills, at an elevation of 11,700 ft.

We walked the narrow, cobbled streets of this once sacred city of the Incas, and paused to reflect that from this spot (chosen by the legendary first Inca, Manco Capac, around A.D. 1100) there grew the mighty Inca Empire which dominated life in South America for nearly 400 years. From this nerve centre the Incas controlled, with a most remarkable degree of efficiency, an empire that extended for more than 3,000 miles;

[1] The New Zealand Andean Expedition, 1962.

and it is indeed perturbing to find now that the highland Indian is worse off today than when ruled by his stern, but just, forefathers some 500 years before.

But we had a rendezvous to keep with our two-man advance party, so reluctantly boarded the colourful 'jungle-train' at Cuzco for the steep descent of the impressive Urubamba gorges to the rail terminal at Huadquiña—a most remarkable journey involving a descent of 7,000 ft., from the cool heights of Cuzco, down to the sweltering tropical climate of the jungle lands. As a work of engineering, the railway is almost as spectacular as the scenery the line traverses. On May 15, true to time, we met up with Walsh and Farrell, only just back from an important eight-day circumnavigation of the climbing region—having travelled in via the Vilcabamba river and over Chocetacarpo Pass to the Pumasillo basin, and returning via the Yanama Pass and the Santa Teresa river back to Huadquiña.

Sleep came slowly on that happy reunion evening, as we chatted into the early hours of the morning exchanging experiences on our respective journeys, and listened to the exciting descriptions of the great ice peaks that briefly showed through the storm clouds now still persisting over the Cordillera Vilcabamba. We had been lured to this relatively inaccessible region of the Andes by the reports and photographs so kindly sent us by Messrs. Meldrum, Clark and Darbyshire, of the 1957 Cambridge Expedition, and those also sent us by Dr. Schatz, leader of the 1959 Swiss-Andean Expedition. Our objectives were the unclimbed ice peaks of Mitre, about 19,000 ft., and Sacsarayoc at about 20,000 ft.—and, as added enticement, there were also two adjacent mountainous regions that remained virtually unexplored and unmapped.

From Huadquiña, a rather tortuous road winds along the narrow bank of the roaring Vilcanota and Urubamba Rivers for a distance of about forty miles, ending at the lively Indian town of Quillabamba. Both the road and rail serve the huge haciendas, which produce all the tropical foods imaginable from fertile lands blessed with terrific heat and humidity. Our destination lay halfway along this road at a rather miserable shanty town called Chaullay, so next morning we trucked our twenty tea-chests of equipment (along with an already overloaded mass of colourful Indians) and really screamed along this hair-raising stretch of road. This was now the end of the road for us insofar as mechanisation went, so we began to break up the gear into mule-load bundles—each bundle weighing about 35 lb., and a mule-load consisting of four such bundles. We looked with perturbed eyes at the gigantic bundle of loads (sufficient supplies for three months) and wondered where we could possibly hire enough mules to carry this hoard of food and equipment along the ninety-mile route up the Vilcabamba river into our Base Camp site in the Pumasillo basin. The altitude at Chaullay is around

# PUMASILLO GROUP OF THE CORDILLERA VILCABAMBA


This map has been compiled from data collected by the New Zealand Andean Expedition, 1962. Peaks and camps have been located by triangulation using prismatic compasses. Errors have been minimised by taking as many sightings as possible. Scale has been established from three separate, measured base lines. Elevations have been calculated from aneroid readings using aircraft altimeters and the geodetic datum of Huadquiña at 4,920 ft. above mean sea level. Deviation from heights presented by previous expeditions is considerable—generally higher.

Ridges, glaciers and snowfields have been interpolated from photographs.

*D. A. Mackay*
*1963*

*To face p. 43*]

4,000 ft. and before Base Camp could be reached at 15,000 ft., several high and difficult passes would need to be crossed by the laden mules—poor lookout for the mules maybe, but an excellent opportunity for us climbers to acclimatise to the altitude and the hard work that lay ahead of us.

We never for a moment thought the job would be as time-consuming as it turned out. For the next three long and weary weeks we were all rather sorely tried as we pleaded, then bribed, then threatened, then cursed, both muleteers and mules—until that wonderful day on June 7 when we finally arrived at our Base Camp site and could then afford the luxury of bidding them all a most vehement farewell. Base Camp No. 1 —our home for the next five weeks—and we all relaxed in the sheer joy of at long last being no longer dependent on outside help: we were now on our own resources. Great ice peaks challenged at every turn of the eyes; the weather had now very definitely settled—no mountaineer could wish for anything more. Our camp was established on a grassy terrace at about 14,600 ft. and a short stroll took us to the sites of the previous British and Swiss Expeditions.

## Ascent of Mitre

We surveyed the scene around us. In a sharp semi-circular sweep, a dozen ice peaks soared skyward, with Mitre dominating them all with its savage steepness and beauty of form. Nowhere had we seen a mountain its equal, and we felt rather privileged that ours would be the first attempt on its delicate summit. We decided to move straight in on an immediate assault, so leaving the others to complete the Base Camp, Walsh and I left early next morning to survey a route for a high camp. Very cautiously, then a little more confidently, we forced a way through the evil-looking, but relatively stable, ice-fall that drains the mountain, and our perseverance was rewarded when we mastered a particularly evil section, to clear the ice-fall and gain access to a small shelf at about 17,500 ft. An ideal safe place for a high camp—the only problem now was to climb the remaining 1,500 ft.—the topmost portion of which appeared as a slender ice tower, either vertical or overhanging. Quickly we returned to Base, jubilant at having found a reasonable packing route through the ice-fall, but not quite so jubilant as regards the ice-spire guarding Mitre's virgin summit.

There was no problem in picking the assault team. The nature of the climb demanded a strong party and the choice naturally led to Walsh, Farrell, Furndorfler and Crawford—a powerful combination, well tried and tested on many interesting new climbs in our New Zealand Alps. We were now all very fit and fresh, so the task of carrying 400 lb. of equipment for the high camp presented no problems (at least not at this early stage of our expedition) and in no time at all this camp was

adequately provisioned, and the remaining three bade the others good climbing and returned to Base.

Crawford comments on the climb of Mitre as follows:

'June 11: Primus trouble delayed our start until 8.15 a.m. The weather looked good as we gained height steadily on steep ice that was fortunately plastered in most places with a thin layer of frozen snow. We traversed diagonally to the left of the rock buttress before continuing directly up towards the summit on a steep slope that was ideal for front-pointed crampons.

'About 300 ft. from the summit we attempted to climb onto the ridge, but were turned back by the usual Andean cornices—huge overhanging mushrooms of snow and ice. We traversed again, Furndorfler and Farrell alternating leads now, cutting steps or safeguarding the front-point climbing with ice pitons. The angle continued to steepen and the extreme exposure was becoming very obvious, until the afternoon cloud that wafted past helped to hide this. My mind cast back to our battle on Nevado Cayesh of two years ago,[2] as this portion of Mitre was now as technically difficult as any part we encountered on Cayesh.

'100 ft. beneath the summit we again tried to escape from the face onto the ridge—any ridge—but the closer North-west one overhung us and without a traverse on almost vertical ice we could not gain the main North–South ridge. We inched our way up until the face petered out under an overhang stretching from ridge-cornice to ridge-cornice. Time was running out and unkind words were being expressed about our virgin friend—but perhaps unjustly, for I noticed a peculiar light shining inside a bergschrund close by, and, on crawling inside, I noticed several icicle-barred windows on the far wall. I broke through the quaint curtain of ice, poked my head through and gazed down the South face flutings to the glacier far below—the steep drop being accentuated by the sight of a woollen mit slithering quietly downwards. Above was 60 ft. of almost vertical mountain, certainly the steepest snow face I have ever seen. It was a mystery how the light, unconsolidated snow remained in position, and I was very non-committal when asked how it looked from here. Farrell squeezed out onto the small ledge and joined me in my silent appraisal.

'After perhaps five minutes, he called inside for Walsh to belay him—I stayed outside to relay instructions—and Farrell disappeared round a bulge. After 1½ hours of shovelling the soft south-facing snow, then cutting steps in the ice beneath, Farrell completed a great climb to tread the delicate summit—the time being 4.15 p.m. The other three climbed up and down in turn, grateful for the pitons that were left behind.

'Sunset was silently watched from the icicle-framed window before

[2] *A.J.* 66. 199.

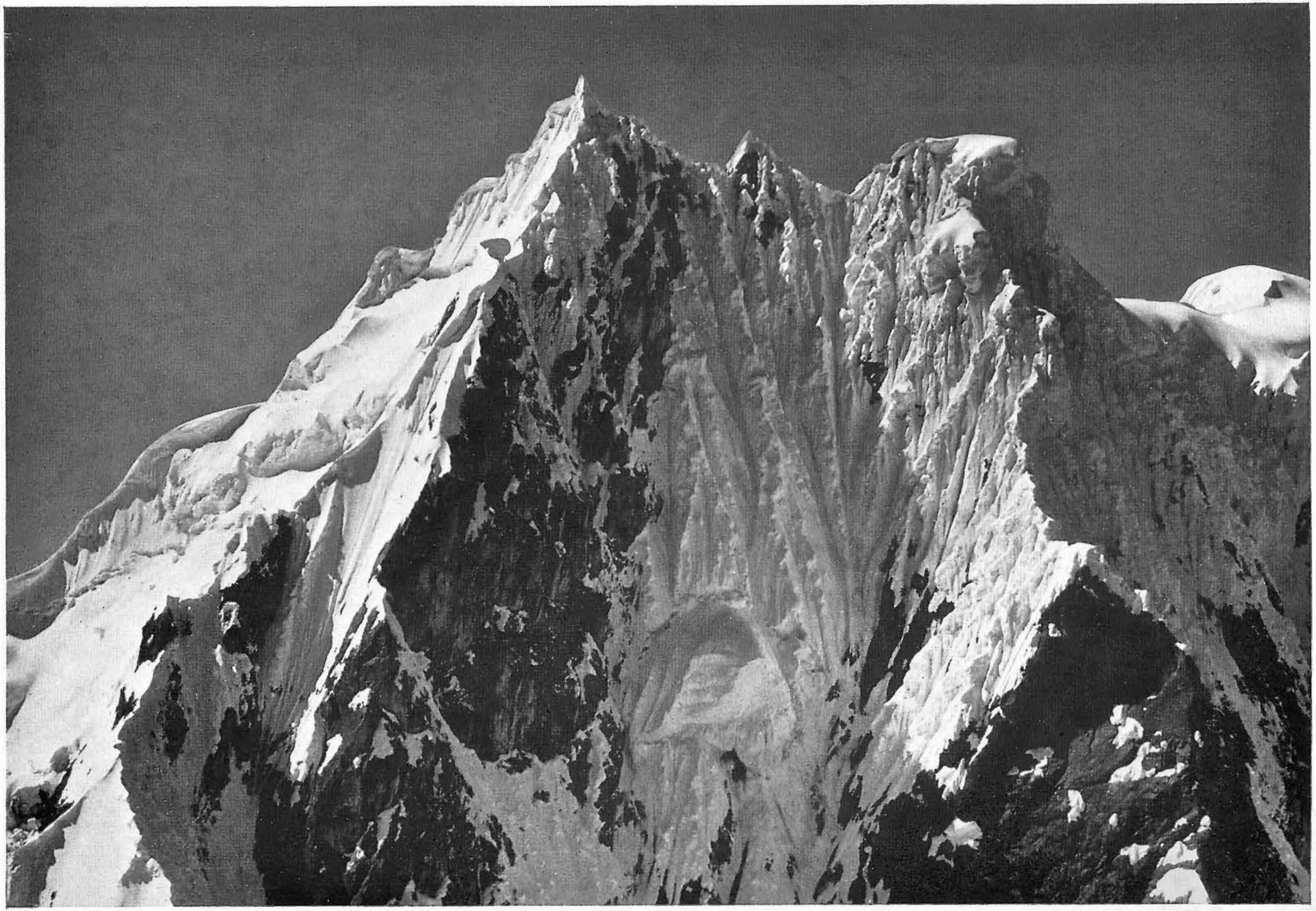

*Photo: N.Z. Andean Expedition*]

MITRE FROM NEAR THE SUMMIT OF CHOCETACARPO, SHOWING THE GENERAL NATURE OF THE ICE-FLUTINGS.

**(No. 13)**

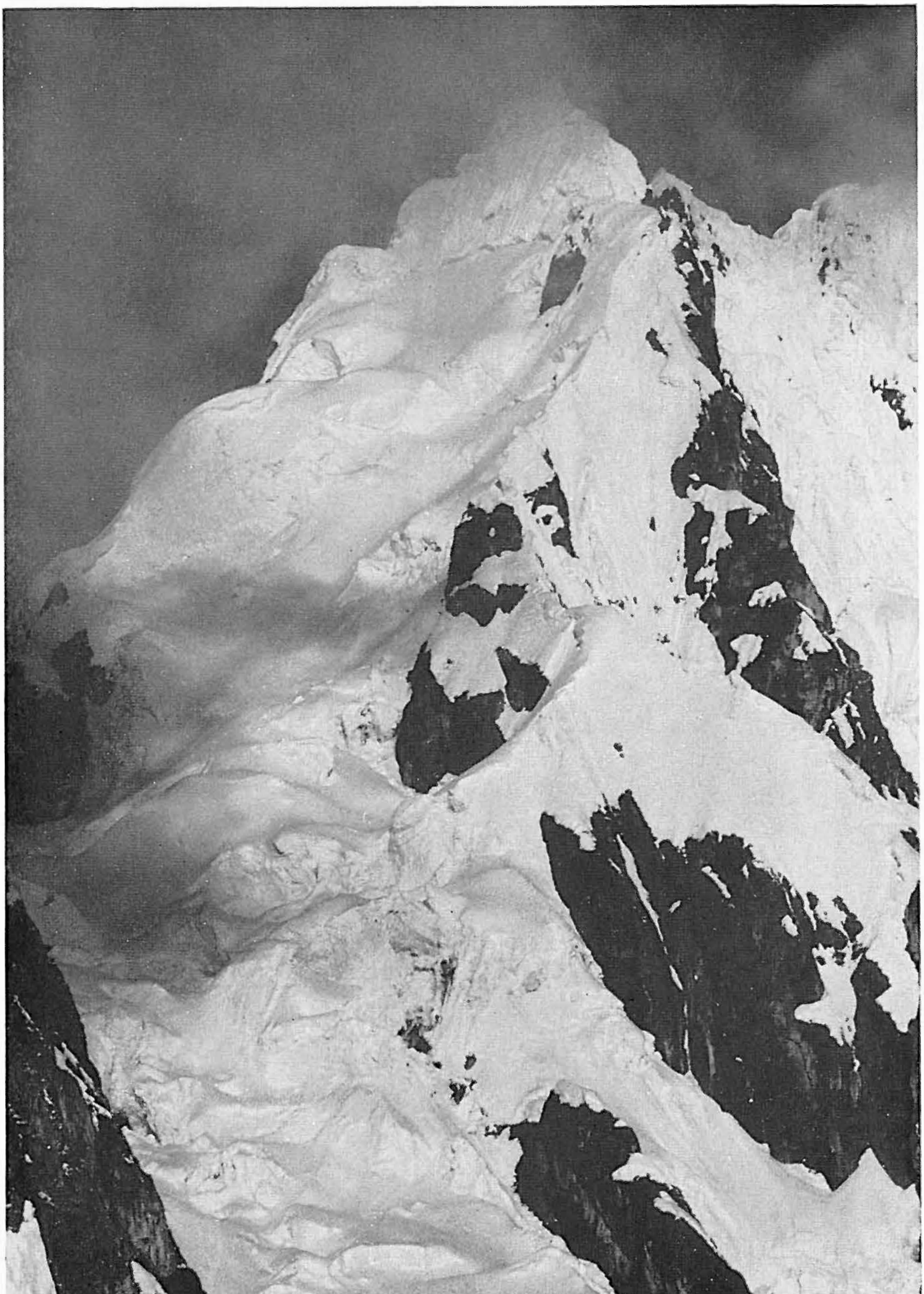

*Photo: N.Z. Andean Expedition*]

MITRE FROM THE HEAD OF THE PUMASILLO BASIN, SHOWING ROUTE OF ASCENT. THE HIGH CAMP WAS SITUATED IN THE TROUGH, BOTTOM LEFT OF THE COL.

**(No. 14)**

we briefly discussed the descent. A half-moon was already up, so we dismissed the idea of a night in the cave, and cautiously continued the descent. Camp was reached at 10 p.m.'

Next day this Mitre party saw the other three climbing steadily on Chocetacarpo and after puzzling over an apparent change of plans for a second climb on Mitre, they then carried the camp down off the mountain. The whole group later celebrated the success on Mitre by making second ascents of Kaiko, Redondo and Chocetacarpo, the latter being climbed by two different routes—thus finishing off the climbing at the head of the Pumasillo basin.

## Battle on Sacsarayoc

Our second objective, the unclimbed Sacsarayoc, now became the centre of our attention, and separate reconnaissance parties made close examinations of both the western and southern approaches to this well-guarded mountain. But alas, we drew a double blank—the western approach would involve us in 3,000 ft. of severe face climbing, continuously menaced by overhanging ice-cliffs from the mountain's summit shelf; while the southern aspect, though not quite so frightening technically, was further complicated by the usual Andean problem of bottomless powder snow. There then remained but one route from which an attempt could be made—a long traverse of the main range over Cabeza Blanca to Sacsarayoc. This choice didn't exactly sweep us off our feet with delight and rapture, but we realised there was nothing else offering; so we decided that all seven men would carry loads of 55 lb. each to the site of a high camp above the steep flutings on Pumasillo's West ridge, which we hoped (somewhat ambitiously) to reach from Base Camp in one very long day. From this camp Crawford and Naylor would attempt the third ascent of Pumasillo, while Farrell and I would try for Sacsarayoc via Cabeza Blanca. Meanwhile, Mackay, Walsh and Furndorfler would return to Base and then, with about eight days' provisions, find a way into the mountainous area north-east of the main range, there to climb and map this interesting, but puzzling, blank on the map.

Our convoy got away early on the morning of June 20, little knowing that our hopes of getting through to a high camp site were to be well and truly smashed. After a long haul in almost overpowering heat we reached the foot of the 'ice-flutings', the section of Pumasillo's West ridge so vividly described by Simon Clark in his book *The Puma's Claw*. As a climbing route it held an interesting challenge, but as a swagging route it fell far short of the ideal and after several hours' step-cutting and relaying loads it became painfully obvious we were not going to make it. Just as dusk was creeping on us the survey group were forced to dump

their loads near a bergschrund, and quickly retrace their steps back to Base. For us, we had obviously bitten off much more than we could chew, and much preparation and placing of fixed ropes would be necessary before we could surmount this steep section with all the gear.

Wearily we gathered in the loads and retraced our steps in the now quickly gathering darkness. The descent of the final 200 ft. in pitch darkness with loads scattered all over the mountain face can only be described as a bit of a nightmare. It was nearly 10 p.m. when we reached the first available flat stretch of snow onto which we threw our lilos and thankfully collapsed for the night. We commenced operations next day by retrieving all those items of equipment (tent, pressure cooker, etc.) that became separated when one of the loads burst open during our nocturnal manoeuvre the previous night, then carried on preparing the route with fixed ropes. We laboured slowly under a scorching sun, becoming more lethargic (and careless) as the day dragged on, and we shuddered at the thought of dragging all the equipment up this route on the morrow. A short rest was badly needed, so when the route was finally safeguarded with fixed ropes and the loads relayed into the relative security of a bergschrund, we agreed that a spell back at Base was necessary. Retrieving only our sleeping-bags, we raced downwards in the now familiar battle against the darkness; and it was very late that night before we crashed into the welcome comforts of Base Camp.

On Sunday, June 24, we left early to renew the stocking of the Pumasillo high camp, better in mind and body (or so we thought) for the two days' rest. We made fast time over now familiar ground and soon were into battle again relaying loads up to a shelf we hacked out of the slope. By 5 p.m. I had at last joined Farrell on top of the flutings, and for the next three hours we hauled furiously on a 300-ft. rope until we thankfully had all the loads up—the whole 400 lb. of them. Crawford and Naylor then climbed up the fixed ropes in the pitch dark to join us and, weary though we certainly were, I couldn't help but admire the team's tenacity. It was a bitterly cold night, but we were too tired to bother with a tent, so just piled into our sleeping-bags at the foot of another ice-wall.

Next morning we awoke to find that the 40-ft. ice-wall against which we slept could not be negotiated with heavy loads, so yesterday's performance was repeated and all the gear hauled up by ropes. By 3.30 p.m. we were above all the headaches on a huge undulating shoulder at about 18,500 ft., so pitched the tents, celebrated with a huge meal, and prepared for an early start on the morrow.

Away at 6.30 a.m. with clear skies but a biting wind—Crawford and Naylor for Pumasillo, Farrell and I for Sacsarayoc—but alas, neither party was wholly successful. The first pair reached within about two rope lengths of Pumasillo's summit, but the late hour would have compelled a benightment, and Crawford's toes, already frost-bitten on his 1960

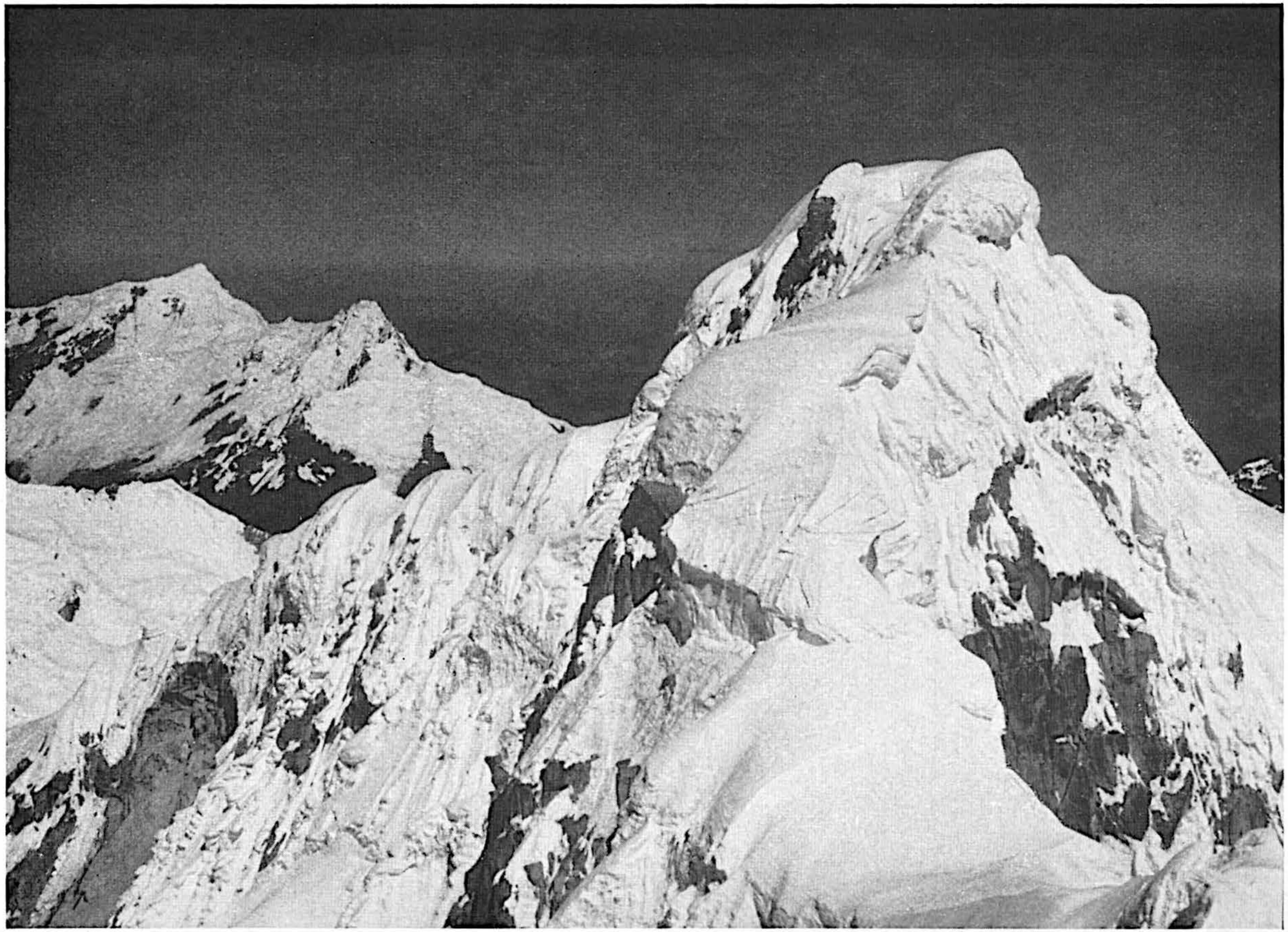

*Photo: N.Z. Andean Expedition*]

SACSARAYOC FROM THE SUMMIT OF CABEZA BLANCA: WEST FACE ON RIGHT, EAST RIDGE AND SLOPES TO THE EASTERN BASIN ON LEFT.

**(No. 15)**

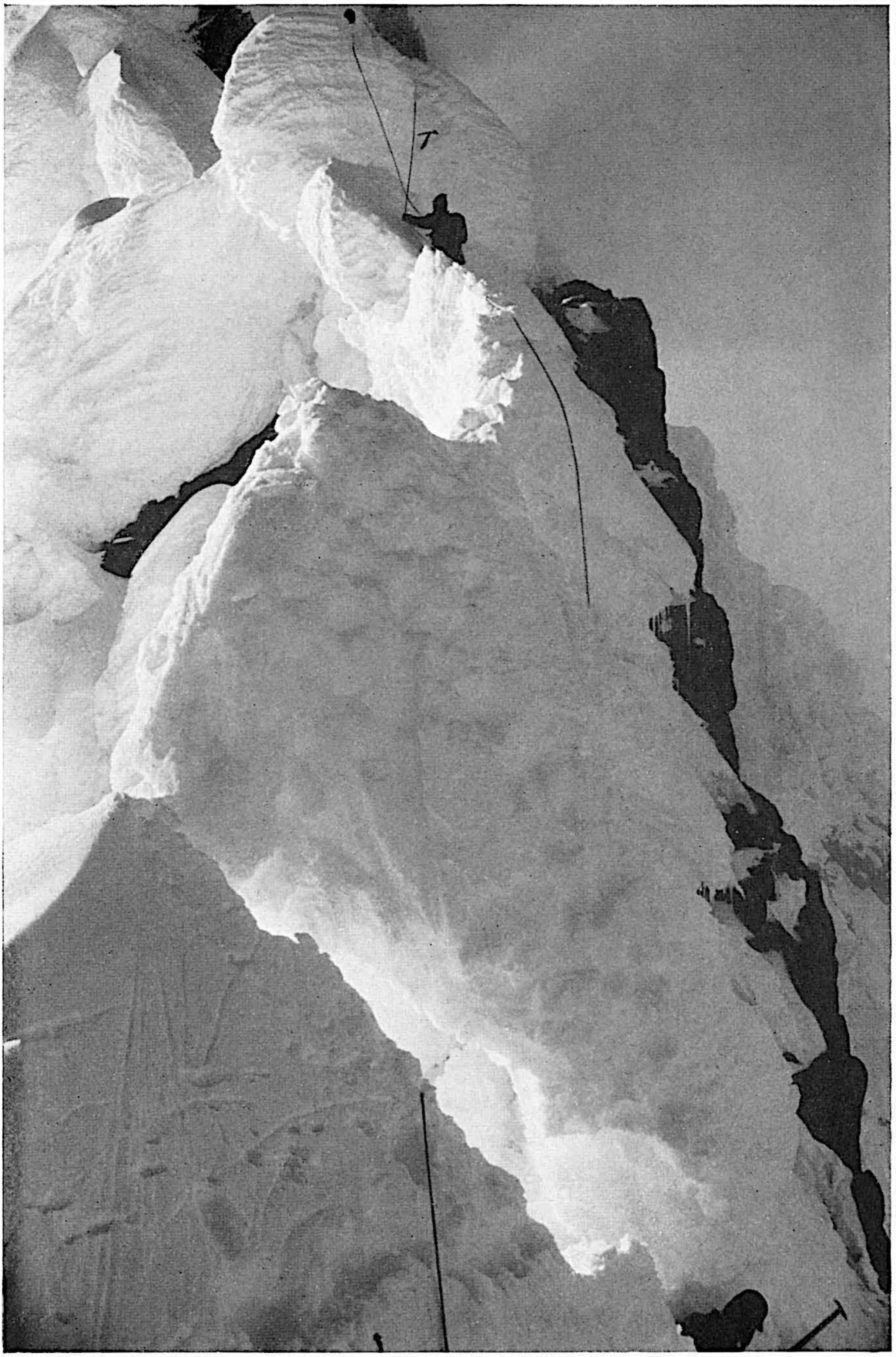

*Photo: N.Z. Andean Expedition*]

ON THE CORNICED RIDGE LOOKING BACK FROM SACSARAYÒC TOWARDS CABEZA BLANCA. SHORTLY BEYOND THIS POINT THE CLIMB WAS ABANDONED AS TOO DANGEROUS.

**(No. 16)**

Cayesh climb, were causing him some concern. Rather than risk his toes, the climb was then abandoned—having surmounted what is known as the 'Egg', a large ice formation only about 60 ft. lower than the summit. Farrell and I didn't even fare as well. We floundered around in soft snow establishing a trail across to Cabeza Blanca, and when we finally arrived on top, the icy wind made things most unpleasant. It was too late in the afternoon for a serious traverse, so we inspected part of the ghastly-looking ridge before then returning. Back in camp Crawford's toe was an ominous colour—it was imperative that he keep it well nursed, keep off the snow as much as possible, and certainly not risk a night out.

For the next two days we kept up the attack on Sacsarayoc's dicey ridge, and by now all four of us had been up and down Cabeza Blanca more times than we cared to remember, but we found the mountain quite a hard nut to crack. The next day Farrell and I left for a climb on Pumasillo, following the route of our companions, and we found this a most interesting and enjoyable climb after the rigours of Sacsarayoc. On June 30, we rose very early, for a final attempt on our virgin peak, as by now our food stocks were rather low, but by 5.30 a.m. daylight revealed an approaching storm, and soon we were enveloped in driving snow. We quickly changed plans, gathered in our sleeping-bags, and evacuated the top camp for a return to Base—Crawford and Naylor agreeing to follow an hour or so later.

Furndorfler greeted us back at Base with the news of much success in their exploration of the north-east region. Walsh and Mackay returned later in the day from a climb on Pucapuca, and when Crawford and Naylor arrived, we were then all together again and soon in good spirits, sitting around a blazing fire, eating a hearty meal.

### Exploration North-east of Pumasillo

Mackay relates the adventures of the three-man exploration group as follows:

> 'There was 3,500 ft. between us and Base Camp when Furndorfler, Walsh and I left the other four to make their camp under the flutings of Pumasillo. The sun plopped below the horizon as we moved with cautious speed down the first steep snow face. We were fifty pounds lighter, but even so felt the frustration of moving one at a time with three on one rope. Ice chips from Farrell's excavations above tinkled around us and once I ducked as a chunk the size and speed of a cannon-ball hummed by. Once on the gentler slopes, we ran to make as much use of the short tropic twilight as possible. We stumbled off the ice as darkness enveloped us. With only one headlamp between us we made slow time to Base Camp by eight o'clock.
>
> 'Although we had promised ourselves a rest day, we changed our

minds after a good night's sleep and eventually got away at 10.30 a.m. with 42-lb. packs. Our equipment was pruned to a minimum and we were working on 1½ lb. of food per man per day. We headed north up to the head of the Pumasillo basin, but the going was hot and slow.

'Our previous tracks had drifted full of snow and it was three o'clock before we stood on North Col. At this time we were uncertain whether the north-eastern basin that we had glimpsed mistily from Redondo and Mitre drained east to the Santa Teresa, or west to the Vilcabamba. In our indirect approach over North Col we were gambling that we could gain access to the basin from the valley that fell away beyond North Col. We sidled around the névé to the east, under Redondo and the graceful peak north-east of it, which an Indian later told me is called Torayoc. This peak is illustrated in a photograph, "The Nameless Aguja", accompanying an article by Ruedi Schatz, in the 1960–61 *Mountain World* (Plate 51). Dusk was gathering as we crossed a saddle and dropped into a wide valley to camp at the edge of a small tarn at 13,800 ft. The tarn lay in the trough formed between an old lateral moraine and the valley side. Although we carried only a tent fly and a Stadskisac we slept warm.

'It had become obvious that the valley in which we were camped was the one which drained the basin we had come to explore. Next morning, June 22, we left our packs and walked up-valley to understand the lie of the land. On the side of the valley opposite to our camp, a long, high, rocky ridge of fingers, towers and spires continued to the south-east where it merged into a white pyramid we called Nevado Blanco. The Southern ridge of this peak dropped, by way of a smaller peak, Cima Rocallosa, to a symmetrical snow col, Mellizos Col. South of Mellizos Col, the ridge rose to the dominating twin peaks of Mellizos. We had seen the tops of these peaks from Redondo, Mitre and Chocetacarpo. The whole face of the mountain was no less impressive. Ice spilled down between black rock outcrops like the lace ruffle of a Jacobean gentleman. There was no easy route from this side. Later research uncovered this mountain as the Ccollpachinachuman of the 1956 American Expedition. They had climbed both of the peaks on separate days from the east. Throughout our expedition we thought these peaks unclimbed and regarded them as fruit we longed to pluck. Mellizos emerged as only the first of a series of high ice peaks that ringed this eastern basin around to Mitre, less spectacular from this side, Redondo and Torayoc. Although we believed at this time that one of the peaks we could see was Pumasillo, there was no agreement amongst us as to which it was. The glaciers that continued towards us from the snow-slopes above soon lost their identity under a jumble of moraine. At the terminus of the dirty ice, a milky-green lake was trapped by ancient moraine walls, remnants of a period of much more

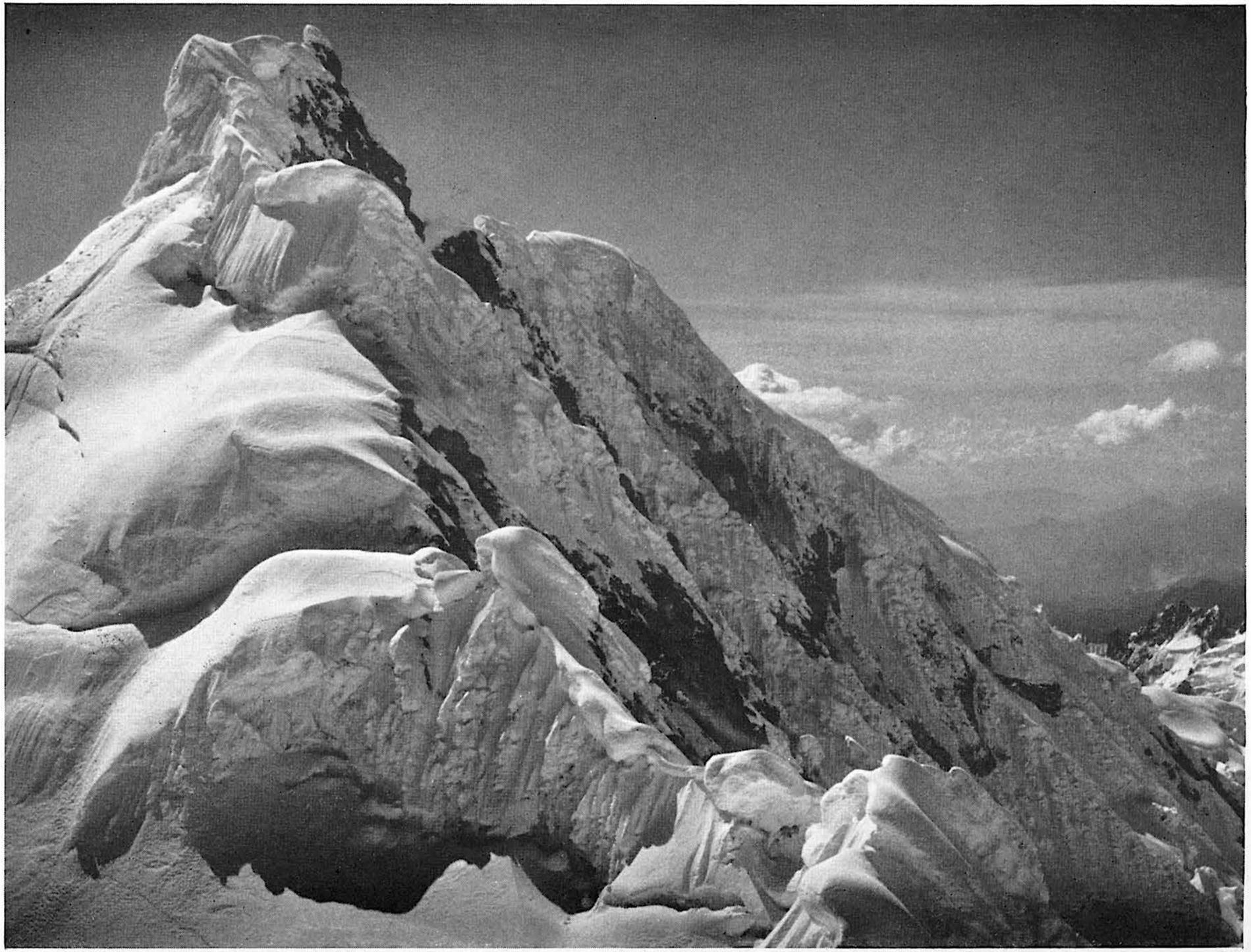

*Photo: N.Z. Andean Expedition*]

PUMASILLO FROM CABEZA BLANCA. THE SUMMIT IS IN THE FAR DISTANCE.

**(No. 17)**

extensive glaciation. The lake was about three-quarters of a mile long and by far the largest of the many in this valley.

'Our purpose was to survey the valley and its complex of peaks, so that we could compile a map of the whole region of the Pumasillo group. Our method was to lay out a baseline of as great a length as possible, measure it (we usually used a climbing rope of known length as a "chain") and using prismatic compasses, take bearings from each end of the baseline on as many prominences as we could see. We realised that our equipment was crude and so, to minimise errors, we took as many sightings and backsightings as possible. Nor did we depend upon one baseline to give us our scale. As well as this one in the north-eastern basin, we established one in the Pumasillo basin and another at the head of the Yanama river. The baselines varied in length from 600 yards to 1,300 yards. For the determination of altitudes we used aircraft altimeters. Although corrections for each individual instrument were applied and adjustments made for changes in temperature no great reliance can be placed on the map altitudes. As with compass bearings, whenever possible, altitude measurements were repeated.

'Furndorfler, Walsh and I laid off 600 yards of baseline along the top of the moraine on the west side of the large lake. We built a cairn at each end of the line and took bearings on all the features we wanted to map, then we retreated to our camp by the tarn. The two large white geese that shared our tarn when we first arrived had gone. Just before dark Walsh and I crossed the tributary valley that drains the north side of North Col, to visit the lakes that nestled at the foot of a rock buttressed peak.

'The question that we were most immediately interested in answering was: "What is beyond Mellizos Col ?", so next morning we packed and moved our camp to a good site just north of the large lake. The top of the moraine made for good travelling as we continued on up towards the col, then we dropped into the trough and, from the terminal ice, cramponed our way up to the crest. Although we enjoyed a fine view of Ausangate, Veronica and the monarch, Salcantay, we could not see the peaks surrounding this new basin and so we decided to climb Cima Rocallosa, immediately to our north.

'Furndorfler led off up the steep snow-slopes. We ploughed through deep, loose powder until we got on to the ridge proper, then Furndorfler cut steps for our return. Nearly two hours after leaving the col, we were on the summit rocks which were warm, if somewhat unstable. We were rather taken aback when the summit wobbled under touch. This was a vantage point indeed, although we still could not see the eastern slopes of the Pumasillo-Sacsarayoc ridge. To the north-east a ridge extended from Nevado Blanco to traverse one or two lower peaks, before the Cordillera apparently ended. We

took compass bearings on all the peaks we could see and a 360-degree panorama of photographs to assist us in the mapping of ridges and snowfields. The late afternoon was clear and cool. Far down in the valley towards Huadquiña, an Indian fire sent a lazy column of blue smoke towards us. Although our descent by an easier route was rapid, it was heavy dusk by the time we were in our camp again. At 14,600 ft. there was no scrub and we missed the fires of our previous camp that had made all the difference to the length of the evening.

'I was particularly interested to learn the fate of the river that had the large lake as its source and also to investigate the country north of Nevado Blanco and the spiky range. Furndorfler and Walsh had been very taken with Nevado Blanco, and so we divided forces, they to move their camp up towards Mellizos Col this day and attempt Nevado Blanco on the next, and I to wander west, north and east. I left camp at 8 a.m. that morning and, crossing the river, sidled by our old camp site before climbing towards a low pass between Nu Nu and the rock-buttressed peak north of it. Everywhere was evidence of past Indian activity. The valley floors bore the ridge marks under their grass cover, that told of past crops of potatoes. Cattle had close grazed these pastures. Here and there a large smoke-blackened boulder told of a seasonal herder's camp. Further up towards the pass, split firewood in neat stacks awaited transport to the village that must, I surmised, be not far down the valley. The groves of Polylepis trees must be highly valued in this comparatively treeless part of the country. From the pass, which I guessed to be about 15,000 ft., I could look down into the Lupins. The only peak visible to the west was Panta, but to the east I could see an interesting new peak. It was snowy, quite high, and later named "Cupula"—The Dome. After taking compass bearings on all the "old" peaks as well as the "new", I hurried off down past the lakes, with their small, brown ducks, and turned north into the main valley again. Two miles downstream, where the first major tributary came in from the east, were the scattered, stone-walled, thatch-roofed huts of a small village. I was shyly greeted by the owner of the first house, a fit young fellow who spoke little more Spanish than I did. The two women sewing by the door tried to appear disinterested and continued with their work, stealing only sidelong glances at the unkempt gringo. As I sat and talked with her husband, one of the women produced a plate of potatoes, boiled as usual in their skins. Although we had been on reduced rations for only three days this food was more than welcome. The Indian told me the Quechua names for several of the major peaks. Like the 1956 American Expedition, we found that the local names for the same peaks differ between the Indians of one valley and the next. Before leaving, I suggested a meal be ready for me at the same time next day.

There were no other Indians to be seen in the village, but I noticed a large group in a field about half a mile downstream. The communal digging for the all important potato crop was in full swing. My path took me by a well-worn track up the eastern tributary of the main stream. After the first rapid gain in height the valley widened out and turned to the south. A red blob on the tall-grass slopes became an Indian woman herding perhaps a hundred sheep and a sprinkling of black goats. Cupula, Nevado Blanco and a significant peak between them, dominated the valley. Cupula resembled the South peak of Huascaran as viewed from the Santa valley. Nevado Blanco promised much better snow conditions from this side, and all three peaks looked reasonable climbs from a valley camp. My track took me high on the north-east side of the valley to a pass that led to another tributary of the Vilcabamba. I rolled out my sleeping-bag by a small tarn and enjoyed a warm fire as the evening mists descended. The day dawned fine as usual and I climbed to the pass and then along the jagged ridge towards Cupula. From a minor summit I took the bearings necessary to tie this basin into the country already surveyed. The track which I had followed crossed two more ridges before it was lost from view. It appeared to be a high level route for mules to Huadquiña or Santa Maria. I returned the way I had come, pausing for a meal of potatoes and a chunk of roast pork at the house of my friends and then the long pull up to find the new camp that Walsh and Furndorfler had established under Mellizos Col.

'They arrived back from their climb of Nevado Blanco just before I got to the camp. Their climb had been successful but made under unpleasant snow conditions. They had climbed by the steep, South ridge on snow all the way. As was to be expected, the snow had been mostly deep powder. Towards the summit, the exposure, steepness and instability of the ridge had almost turned them back, but they had won through to record the height of 17,790 ft. and taken a useful round of compass bearings. We slept well and warm amongst huge morainic boulders at 15,400 ft.

'The next day, June 26, was our last for exploration and so we decided to climb onto the eastern slopes of Mellizos in an endeavour to see the east side of the elusive Pumasillo-Sacsarayoc ridge. After crossing the col we soon left the ice and sidled up rock and scree to gain the broken ice that covers those eastern faces of Mellizos. None of us was going at all well. Walsh and I left Furndorfler, feeling ill, at the foot of the ice and moved one at a time around and up. The slope eased off and the snow softened. We called it quits at noon. We could not see all we wanted to, but we still had a long way to travel that day and we could see that another hour at our current speed would profit us little. Lasunayoc was plainly visible with its string of

outlying peaks to the east. The summits of Mellizos looked accessible from here and we determined to return later and climb them. It took us ten minutes to descend the snow that had taken us two hours to climb. We agreed that there was a big future for downhill travel. Although we were happily headed for home, our pace was not rapid. We were hungry and had little prospect of changing that for twenty-four hours. With our camp packed we set off down the moraine. Our route lay around the large lake, up the length of the baseline on its west bank, to a camp-site on a sandy flat amid mounds of morainic debris. A cold wind blew down on us as the sun left the tops of the saw-toothed range to the north.

'The wind continued on the tops next day as we climbed the rocky scree outcrop and firm, gently sloping snow to Mitre Col. We were glad to drop down a few feet onto the bottom lip of a snow-filled bergschrund out of the relentless wind, for our snack. It had not been necessary to use the rope until now, but these west faces were broken and we sidled this way and that, avoiding the biggest "slots". We were impatient to get to Base and tried to find a short-cut through a maze of crevasses instead of gaining a little height and sidling across easy slopes. Tempers were getting short by the time we rejoined our tracks of a week previous. We rested on the site of Camp I (Mitre) and wondered why the two figures were returning to their camp high on the Pumasillo ridge at 3.30 p.m. Had they been turned back so early in the day or were they just getting in after a night out? We hurried on down to Base Camp dreaming of all the goodies that awaited us in the food tent. A note at Base told us of the other boys' return after two nights out on the Pumasillo ridge and of their renewed attack. They intended to be back next day, but they were not, nor the day after. Furndorfler, Walsh and I ate, washed ourselves and our clothes, and read for these two days, then Walsh and I decided to climb the unnamed peak immediately south of Pucapuca. We left Base at 7 a.m. and used the same route we had used for Pucapuca until we were above the ice-fall, then we headed straight for the peak and climbed to its summit of 17,750 ft. by way of the North-east snow face. The climb was very straightforward and we seldom moved one at a time, in fact we scarcely stopped chattering all the way from Base. The top was in cloud, which only occasionally relented to give us a glimpse of the valleys below. The return was quick without being hurried and we were back in Base Camp by 1.30 p.m.'

## Back to Sacsarayoc

The morning of July 4 dawned crystal clear after the storms of the preceding days, so Walsh, Furndorfler, Farrell and myself left early with

light loads for the existing high camp up on Pumasillo's West ridge—with the idea of a final attempt on Sacsarayoc. Mackay and Naylor had left the day before to undertake seven days' climbing and exploration on the Yanama range, and Crawford (poor fellow) was forced to remain alone at Base, as his toe looked ominously gangrenous.

The day grew hotter and hotter as we progressed higher up the mountain, and there was no relief whatever from the scorching sun. Its heat was almost overpowering, and how we prayed for a cloud to shield us from the reflected rays! Only a day ago we were cursing the bad weather and pleading with 'el sol' to show his face again. In spite of the heat (or maybe because of it) we made quite fast time to reach the high camp by 3.30 p.m., an appropriate hour for afternoon tea.

Next morning we were all away bright and early with clear skies but a biting wind, and by 8.30 a.m. we stood atop of Cabeza Blanca at 19,600 ft. With more fixed ropes and aluminium angle staves we went into battle—this time knowing we would have to spend at least one night, and probably two nights, out on the ridge. From Cabeza Blanca's summit the ridge plummetted steeply for about 500 ft., then eased out before swinging up sharply to Sacsarayoc's 19,810-ft. virgin summit—the two peaks being about $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles apart. True to Andean form, this ridge consisted of huge overhanging mushrooms of unstable snow, each mushroom separated by a vertical break as if sections had been cut from the ridge with a huge knife.

We persevered ever so slowly for about eight hours, by which time we had used up all fixed ropes and anchoring angles, and had progressed barely a third of the way. We could have persevered and climbed the mountain by this ridge, but we were already working on a rather slender margin of safety, more trouble lay ahead of us, and the descent had also to be made retracing our steps along the cursed ridge. Reluctantly we abandoned the climb as being too dangerous under the conditions encountered, and in a race against impending darkness, cautiously retraced our steps to haul ourselves up the final fixed rope onto the summit of Cabeza Blanca again by 7.30 p.m.

The darkness and the bitter cold did nothing to improve our jaded spirits as we fumbled in the gloom back to our camp, reached at 10.30 p.m. A raging wind howled unceasingly throughout the night, and it was just as boisterous next day so we stayed put, and packed the camp down to Base on July 7. Much concentrated effort on Sacsarayoc had ended in failure, but bitterly disappointed though we were, we had yet another string to our bow and we didn't intend to write the mountain off just yet.

Crawford was pleased to see us at Base again after being entirely on his own, and on July 9 Mackay and Naylor returned from further success on the Yanama range. It was quite amazing how morale improved now

that we were all together again, and on that particular night I saw the strength that comes from that intangible but essential expedition quality —team spirit. Everybody was soon debating the problem of Sacsarayoc, to determine whether an attempt could be made via its East ridge—the only remaining route from which this stubborn mountain could be attempted. The really big problem was just how and where we crossed the main range with loads to establish a high camp for the assault. To follow the route of the Survey Party via Mitre Col and Mellizos Col would be an impossibility without porters, as each packing trip would require three days and entail much gaining, losing and regaining of altitude. Fortunately however, Mackay and Naylor, while mapping on the Yanama range, had noticed and explored an interesting glacier draining south-east of Lasonayoc, joining the Yanama river up near its head, and they reported that access to the huge eastern basin could possibly be made via this route (over Lasonayoc Col). From observations taken on the summits of Pumasillo and Cabeza Blanca it appeared necessary to cross a high dividing ridge running north-east off Lasonayoc, which split the head of this eastern basin into two sections. Once over this obstacle, the conditions of access looked feasible, though rather broken up. We decided the route over Lasonayoc Col offered most possibilities, and congratulated them on their find. Here are Mackay's comments on their explorations:

'On July 3, the day before Hearfield, Walsh, Furndorfler and Farrell renewed the attack on Sacsarayoc, Naylor and I left Base Camp to explore the country to the east of Yanama. Our first stop was Paccha, for a plate of *moraya*, the Indian answer to freeze-dried potatoes, and some chunks of soft, white cheese. *Moraya* is produced by soaking small potatoes in a stream for twelve days and then laying them out for two days to freeze at night and dry out in the sun during the day. They form an important item of trade with the "jungle" Indians, but to us they were no delicacy.

'A major tributary, draining the South faces of Sacsarayoc and Lasonayoc, joins the valley just below the waterfall from which Paccha gets its name. We crossed the tributary and followed the well-formed mule track. It was a hot and thirsty way up the forty odd zig-zags to the saddle that overlooks Yanama, but here was a useful survey point from which we could tie in the Yanama range to the work we had already done in the Pumasillo basin. It was 2,000 ft. down to Yanama and our first time for a month below 12,000 ft. We felt lethargic and oppressed. There was no more order apparent in this village than there had been in the one I had visited on the previous survey trip. Four or five houses were close to the main "muleway", but others were high above it, as if their dwellers were prepared to sacrifice the

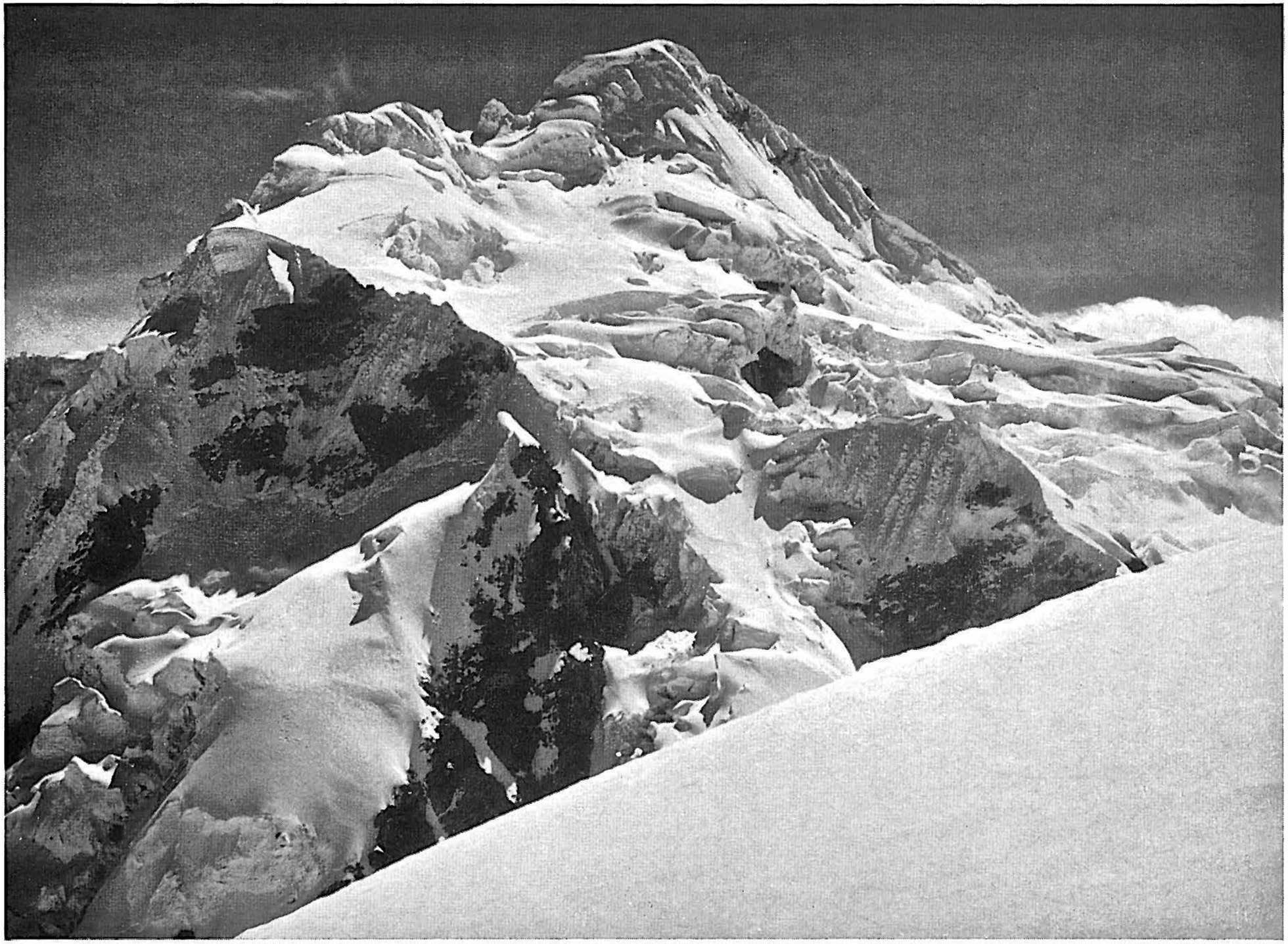

*Photo: N.Z. Andean Expedition*]

LASONAYOC FROM THE PEAK EAST OF LASONAYOC COL, SHOWING THE ROUTE OF THE BELL AMERICAN EXPEDITION, 1956. THE NEW ZEALAND ASCENT BY THE NORTH-WEST FACE IS NOT SHOWN IN THIS PICTURE.

**(No. 18)**

advantages of accessibility for a few minutes extra sunshine. Elderberry trees along the lower edge of the track were breaking into pale, green leaf. Further evidence of the lower altitude was the occasional crop of broad beans growing in small, stone-walled fields. We saw isolated plants of Quinoa, a herb, the seeds of which are boiled to make a sort of gruel, but in this village, perhaps most noticeable of all, there were few people. Our first night's camp was about two miles up the valley from Yanama. The Yanama range itself offered five tempting peaks, but from its western end we could gain relatively little of mapping value. We therefore decided to spend the first part of the week exploring to the east and to return later for an attack on Yanacocha, an attractive, snow-capped peak overlooking Yanama.

'On July 4 we continued on up the track towards the Santa Teresa, but turned south at the foot of Yanama Pass. Our intention was to attempt Puerta de Yanama (Door to Yanama), a snow peak at the south "corner" of the Yanama river headwaters. Easy tussock slopes led to a short moraine and a good camp site a few yards from the terminal ice of a stubby glacier. Thankfully we dropped our 45-lb. packs at 15,700 ft. As the day was yet young, we decided to climb to the col above the camp, cramponing up firm snow to the lip of the bergschrund which forms the crest of the divide and gives the col its name. The south side of the range was a nightmare of shiny slabs that dropped dizzily to the Apurimac. The opposite slopes of this wide valley were a pastel patchwork of irregular fields, but too far away for us to see anything in detail.

'We were away to a fair start at 7 o'clock next morning and went straight up the scree and rock east of the camp to get on to the snow at about 16,500 ft. Roping up and sidling round the right-hand side of the broken névé, we paused to take bearings at 9.30 a.m., when the cloud started to come in. After crossing to the centre of the snowfield, we broke through the final schrund and started on the steep North face. For much of this we were climbing on the front points of our crampons and our gain in height was rapid. At 11.30 a.m. we stepped on to the North ridge only a few paces from the summit. We cursed the white-out that gave us only occasional glimpses of the peaks we knew and others, to the south-east, that we were seeing in detail for the first time—Quishuar and two nearer neighbours. Deteriorating snow conditions urged us back down the snow face and we raced back to camp.

'A pattern of weather seemed to be developing. Nights were clear and the first part of the mornings fine and sunny, but by 9.30 or 10 a.m. cloud would come in to such an extent that the day was over for survey work. We were still very curious about the east face of the Pumasillo-Sacsarayoc ridge. It seemed that the best approach to a

vantage point lay up the valley opposite to the one in which we were now camped, to a col south-east of Lasonayoc. If we were to be on that col before it clouded in tomorrow, we should move our camp, in what was left of today, as far up that valley as we could. After a quick brew, we scurried off down-valley at 3 p.m. We didn't stay on the mule track for long, but sidled around to reach the valley floor at the toe of the moraine. Then began the long pull up the right-hand trough. We camped at 15,000 ft. amongst a number of house-sized boulders, one of which overhung enough to keep the lightly falling snow out of the cooking pot. At 6.30 next morning we followed the moraine on up until a tributary glacier gave easy access to the main ice. Snow conditions were good until we reached the last steeper slopes under the col, but because of their less exposure to the sun these were of deep powder. Although we were on the col by 10 a.m. we were too late, for the basin was already filled with cloud blotting out all the peaks except Lasonayoc on our left and Ttiyuyoc on our right. We decided to seek consolation in the minor peak south-east of Lasonayoc Col. Gentle snow-slopes led to a short, very steep, face. From the top of this I looked across to the last rock pitch and advised retreat. We lost height and sidled to the north under the rock to cut our way again on to the ridge. A slender snow-bridge discouraged us from the rock summit and we went south along the broad crest until it narrowed and ended in a spectacular ice pinnacle. As I belayed Naylor on to this, I thought with horror of the recovery problem should one of us slip. We retraced our steps to camp, packed up and half an hour later stopped for the night at the toe of the moraine by wood and water. A good fire and a lazy yarn made for a pleasant evening.

'From this camp next morning we measured off a 1,300-yard base-line across the flat to the south and took bearings on all we could see from each end of the line. It was our aim today to set a camp as high as possible on the slopes of Yanacocha, the peak on the western end of the Yanama range. We sidled up steep lupin-covered slopes which soon gave way to close grazed grass and the occasional potato patch. The gap between us and the valley floor widened as the track rose and the river dropped. A condor swooped on us as we lunched on a rocky spur. He was probably looking for the small, brown snake that had wriggled nervously across the track as we approached. In steeper going then, we climbed around the North ridge of Yanacocha and, at last, on to the *roche moutonée* that traps the lake nestling at 15,200 ft., between the North and West ridges. There were half a dozen flapper ducks which kept well away from us and four of the big, white geese that we had seen in the north country. We rolled out our bags in the lee of a large boulder and, for once, enjoyed the setting sun in peace.

'By 6.30 we were away on a beautiful morning. A sharp frost made it easier to move than to stand and the wisps of mist in the dark-green valleys to the west foretold good weather. We scrambled quickly up the tussock and rock of the North ridge to the snow. The snow was in fine crampon condition but we soon ran out of it and reluctantly cramponed over a short stretch of rock. It was now 8 a.m. and we seemed no more than two hours of steep, straightforward climbing from the summit. Soon we were cut off by a vertically-sided gap in the ridge. Removing our crampons we dropped off the ridge to the west. The gap was by-passed without too much difficulty and then we tried several alternative routes on the sound, warm rock without success. It now became a matter of retreating halfway to camp and starting again, this time up the face, or of trying one last unpromising couloir. Naylor led up on a long rope. Just near the crest he found a tunnel, half-choked with glassy ice. From the crest the climbing was going to be on difficult rock, so we decided to try the tunnel. Naylor cleared ice enough for us to squeeze through and "front point" down to the east side of the ridge. From here we easily climbed a rising snow shelf and crossed several snow patches towards the summit ridge. The peak seemed ours, when we were cut off by yet another gap. This one could probably have been negotiated with a lot of work, but it was now 1 o'clock and in the last five hours we had gained only 100 ft. We decided to accept defeat and were back in camp by 3.30 p.m.

'Intent now on camping this night on the western end of the range, we dropped 2,000 ft. to a disused water channel and headed west. The channel ended at a steep gully where sluicing operations must have been carried out in the past. Although there was plenty of wood about, we could find no water. The night had caught us, but relented to light our way dimly down to Yanama with the first quarter of a moon.

'We ate the last of our food for breakfast and with light packs raced up the 2,200 ft. to Yanama Saddle in an hour and a half. The senora at Paccha, gave us *chicha* (maize beer), *aguardiente* (sugar cane distillate) and potatoes roasted in their jackets. She may have wondered at our effusive thanks and the ravenous manner in which we consumed her offerings. We waddled up the valley to Base Camp.'

## To Pastures New

The prospect of establishing Base Camp in an entirely new region appealed to all of us; so we had no regrets when, on July 12, we broke camp for the last time in the Pumasillo basin, very willingly tossed the loads onto the mules, and ambled down-valley to our friends at Paccha. Here we stayed for the night, and as we sat on the dirt floor in the dark,

soot-laden room listening to their fascinating folk music, our minds cast back several hundred years and pictured the antecedents of this rugged family passing away the time of night in an almost identical manner (though possibly without a 'gringo' audience!). Time has really stood still for these Andean Indians; and yet from their extreme poverty and simplicity of life there emanates a degree of generosity and sincerity seldom witnessed in our more modern style of living.

From the small 'village' of Paccha (if you could call two houses a village) the mule track rose sharply across the end of a high spur before dropping steeply several thousand feet down to the floor of the Yanama valley. It was then a long, weary drag in the hot afternoon sun up the Yanama valley, then quite steeply up a side valley to the site of a new Base Camp at about 15,000 ft. again. Here the mules were tethered for the night, camp was made, and we treated the two muleteers to all the delights and wonders of a slap-up meal of dehydrated chicken stew. Next morning we repaid their helpfulness with bonus gifts of old clothing, manila hemp rope (very highly valued), porridge, biscuits, chocolate etc. Their farewell was most affectionate and prolonged—only terminated by our solemn promise 'Regresaremos dentro de dos años'. Once clear of this rash promise, Mackay, Furndorfler and Naylor left to dump a load of supplies up on Lasonayoc Col in readiness for the morrow, while the rest of us organised our new Base Camp, and completed the provisions for another high camp—this time using only one tent and very slender rations to last four men for six days.

The weather pattern was by now less settled than earlier, so we decided all seven would carry loads right through to a site in the eastern basin without the delay of a preliminary reconnaissance—again this proved an unwise course, but we took the gamble in the hope of finding a reasonable way across. From Lasonayoc Col we dropped about 500 ft. towards what appeared an accessible point at which to cross the North-east ridge of Lasonayoc, but we ran into an impenetrable ice-fall which forced us up about 500 ft. again until we got above the worst of it. Once on the ridge, however, we found the slopes on the other side just dropped away vertically into the basin—an impossible situation with loads. Higher and higher we climbed, and every time we stuck our nose over the ridge, the aspect was always a vertical drop. By now it was 4 p.m. and it was imperative that Crawford return to Base with his still bothersome toe—so the loads were dumped where we had gathered, and Crawford, Mackay and Furndorfler retraced their steps in the little daylight still available. It was important that we find a suitable crossing spot of this barrier ridge, so while Walsh and Naylor prepared a meal at the temporary camp, Farrell and I dashed off higher up the mountain, and at around 18,500 ft. we found the only feasible spot. The slope was 60° in places, broken in its lower reaches by an enormous schrund, below which it

eased into the undulating slopes of the huge basin. On a 400-ft. rope it appeared we could lower all the loads down without too much bother, so we returned to our makeshift camp with the hopeful news.

We awoke and pushed off early, knowing we were in for a hard day—and a hard day it surely was! After eight tiring hours the loads had all been relayed, then lowered down the worst of the slope, so we paused just below the big schrund for a light snack. The loads were gathered together and it seemed they would have to be relayed the remainder of the distance. This could not be accomplished without an additional day's effort and we couldn't afford this delay with its resultant effect on our food rations, so with knees knocking, we shouldered 80 lb. apiece and literally staggered off—hoping to accomplish what we knew to be almost impossible. The prolonged activity above 18,000 ft. had by now very noticeably sapped our stamina, and the remainder of this journey required, at least on my part, the greatest concentration of physical effort just to place one weary foot in front of the other. We stopped at dusk midway between Lasonayoc and its western unnamed neighbour at a height of 18,200 ft.—well short of our intended destination, but physically incapable of further effort. Snow was falling and the weather looked unsettled.

## Ascent of Sacsarayoc

At 4 a.m. next morning we peered out into a world of falling snow and zero visibility, so thankfully went back to our bags and stayed put all day. A day of this was quite enough, so we stirred ourselves to action early on the morning of July 18 even though the weather was still cloudy and lightly snowing. After sidling around towards our objective, we then made for the ridge at a col just down from the 19,000 ft. unnamed peak, along which we hoped to climb to Sacsarayoc's virgin summit. This ridge had been closely scrutinised through binoculars and it appeared reasonable, with possibly only one very difficult section—a 70-ft. vertical ice-wall at about 19,400 ft. Once above this obstacle, the summit beckoned along a seemingly royal road of truly Inca proportions.

By 2 p.m. after some stretches of pretty exhilarating ridge climbing, we came up to this problem, and it was every bit as bad as we feared. Through the mist and falling snow we gazed with annoyance at the vertical wall of smooth, black ice, which just could not be by-passed. We had to surmount this wall or admit defeat; and as we paused for a short snack, the strong man Farrell quietly gathered in all the pitons and étriers he could muster, and moved into battle. 3 p.m.—4 p.m.—5 p.m.—6 p.m., and Farrell was still slowly inching his way past the overhanging bulges towards the top. A night out for all of us was quite obvious, but

we were concerned that Farrell might not surmount the final pitch before dark and so be forced to stand in étriers all night, or descend and lose all his hard-won height. By 6.20 p.m. with no more than ten minutes of daylight left, he managed to obtain a sufficient anchor in the soft snow above the ice-wall wearily to haul himself up over the lip. We could not but admire his skill and tenacity, but this was no time for romancing, as we were in a very exposed position.

The wind-driven snow was whirling all around us as Farrell prepared to 'bed-down' for the night above the ice-step, while I remained on the narrow ridge below. Meanwhile Walsh and Naylor had previously descended a little way to where an ice-bulge promised a little shelter. We were without bags and bivouac equipment of any sort, and could only hope the weather would not worsen. I couldn't help but think of our predicament should we now be lashed by a storm of the severity so frequently encountered back in the Southern Alps of New Zealand, but luckily for us the Andean weather kept fairly true to its reputation.

Around midnight the snowing ceased and the moon broke through the scattering clouds to bathe our solitary vigil in its cold light, and we waited patiently for the first signs of the life-giving sun to appear over the tops of the foothills, hundreds of miles over in Brazil; but alas, our luck was out, for around 4 a.m. our mountain range was again enveloped in cloud and further snow, and we were destined not to see 'el sol' all day. Some four or five hours later we limbered up to restore circulation to our sluggish bodies, then continued with the climb. Farrell, now well and truly in the box seat above the ice-wall, screamed abusive encouragement at us, but with a chronic shortage of artificial aids (many of which were lost on the wall) both Walsh and myself found things a little difficult. After wasting several hours in vain attempts, I yelled up to Farrell:

'How does it look to the summit from up there?'

'Not too bad—it looks O.K.'

'Well then, go it alone, "Hermann".'

He disappeared from view and for two hours we patiently, and very anxiously, awaited his return. Great was our joy and relief when his head later showed above the ice-step and greater still was our relief when he shouted that he had reached the summit and Sacsarayoc had at last been climbed.

While Farrell descended the wall, retrieving as much 'ironmongery' as possible, Walsh and Naylor commenced the descent back to camp, for the hour was creeping on, visibility was still patchy and we had a long way to go among the crevasses of the eastern basin. I greeted Farrell and congratulated him on his splendid solo achievement, then hastily we packed in the 'ironware' and cautiously descended the ridge in the tracks of our companions. After a lot of wandering around in ever increasing circles we finally found the route through the crevasses, and

thankfully reached camp only just ahead of the darkness. Vast quantities of soup were consumed before we sank contentedly into our warm bags. Bad weather the following day forced us to remain in camp, so we idly chatted about the possibility of a lightning assault on Lasonayoc and its western virgin outlier before our food stocks ran out altogether.

Unfortunately this 'idle chatter' was taken rather seriously, and by 5.30 a.m. on July 21 we were away for our last day's climbing—Walsh and Naylor on one rope for the unnamed 19,000-ft. virgin, Farrell and I for a second ascent of Lasonayoc (first climbed by the 1956 Bell American Expedition from the east). The first rope climbed their virgin peak via its North face, as both its East and West ridges looked rather unhealthy. The route was steep but no great problems were encountered, and they were able to return to camp by early afternoon. We, on the other rope, took a little longer—in fact we didn't reach Lasonayoc's shaky summit till nearly 5 p.m. and we were forced to descend most of the mountain in the darkness, facing in with our front-pointed crampons on its deceptively steep north-west slopes. We were mighty thankful when Walsh was able to guide us off the mountain in the latter stages with his headlamp, and assist us back to camp—reached at 9 p.m. Now there were no more peaks to climb in this great mountain range, so we could safely pack up and head for home. We shook hands all round, then ravenously devoured the soup Naylor had so kindly prepared for us.

On the morning of July 23 we consumed the final helping of thin soup which was all that remained of our food, then packed up the tent and commenced the return to Base in very poor visibility. We were noticeably 'scratchy' as we tried to navigate among some monstrous crevasses in a complete whiteout, but with perseverance we gradually lost altitude, till at about 17,500 ft. we got below the cloud barrier and the way became delightfully clear. Meanwhile Mackay, Crawford and Furndorfler, a little concerned at our being three days overdue, had moved up to Lasonayoc Col in preparation for a search, and there was much waving and shouting when they spotted us in the distance. Light of heart, we followed them back up to the col and down to Base Camp, listening as they related their activities on the Yanama range again. Their mapping programme was now very satisfactorily completed, and they finished operations with a fine attempt on the virgin Quishua, only to be foiled by a heavy snowstorm. Our arrival back at Base was celebrated by unrestrained eating and sleeping, but an overdose of the former caused me much vomiting and sickness for the next day or so.

With all operations successfully completed, we now lost no time in hiring mules and returning to civilisation again—our return journey being over the Yanama Pass and down the lovely Santa Teresa valley. This river joins the main Vilcanota river right at the rail terminal of

Huadquiña, which we reached in the late afternoon of Saturday, July 28. The mountaineering aspect of our expedition had now come to an end, but for all of us another phase was only just beginning, and we keenly anticipated the second part of the programme—that of visiting some of the fascinating cities in South America; especially the most fascinating of them all, Brasilia.