two places, leaving some 10 feet in the middle still adhering to the mountain. The length of the parts which broke away was, perhaps, 40 feet on each side of the remaining portion.' Commenting on the accident in the *Alpine Journal* Freshfield, the editor, wrote that there need be 'no hesitation in pressing on all climbers, guides or amateurs, the lesson of this lamentable disaster. The danger is no new or unfrequent one; snow cornices have been and always must be encountered in the most prudent mountaineering. This is not the first, though the most impressive, warning of their peril.' As a result of the accident the frontier ridge over the Lyskamm became one of the most feared routes in the Zermatt region for many years.

The final notable climb of the season took place in the Bernina Alps where on 13 September Paul Güssfeldt, with Hans Grass and Caspar Capat, made the first ascent of Piz Scerscen. Any route on the Scerscen is a serious proposition and it is recognized as one of the more difficult peaks in the Alps.

In conclusion, the present writer recently had occasion to recall, while admiring the panorama from the summit of the Aiguille de Rochefort, one of the more unusual expeditions which took place one hundred years ago. Lord Wentworth and Signor G. de Filippi, accompanied by a number of guides and porters, made an attempt 'to get to the top of the Dent du Géant by means of rockets. On the north of the Dent, only 80 mètres below the summit, is a platform of rock, and on the opposite flank, at a somewhat lower level, a corresponding one. The object was to pass a rope over the summit from platform to platform by means of rockets. A mechanism had been prepared for this purpose by Signor Bertinetti, of Turin. At the third attempt success seemed about to crown the plan, the party on the north side saw the rocket stick fall at their feet, but a gust of wind carried back the rope, and all subsequent attempts were equally unsuccessful. The Dent du Géant still remains unconquered. Whether or not it is allowable to use such weapons against a peak, proved inaccessible by all ordinary means, is a nice question of mountaineering morals on which we do not feel called to express any opinion.'

Although the enterprise did not succeed it must have been great fun.

Events and Trends 1974–6 The Andes

Evelio Echevarría

The main trend in Andean climbing in the last 3 years has been the increasing preference for new, technical routes at the expense, it is to be assumed, of exploratory mountaineering. It can also be said that on the average, expeditions seem to be diminishing in size, while at the same time undertaking more and more difficult propositions. As before, interest in the Northern Andes has been moderate, and Peru and Patagonia seem to continue to draw the greater part of the activity.

Venezuela

New routes attempted (like the NE buttress and face) on Pico Bolívar, highest in the country, have resulted in a number of fatalities, all of them Venezuelan. It should be mentioned, by the way, that Pico Bolívar had its height mercilessly lowered, by some 'cruel realist', as Sir Douglas Busk had foreseen, from 5002 to 4979m.[1]

Colombia

The Santa Marta range is still closed to expeditions but mountaineers, being what they are, continue to travel to this fine range and, more often than not, have succeeded in reaching their goals, in spite of the surveillance of the Arhuaco Indians, actual owners of the valleys that offer the shorter approaches to the range. An American party under Phillip de Gruyter traversed the range from NW to SE, climbing along the way Pico Simmons (5660m) and Nevado Tesoro (5250m) and reported at the exit to the Arhuacos with a *fait accompli*. An Italian party stole its way from the S, where the majority of the Arhuaco population lives, and made the second ascent of the S face of El Guardián (5285m). However, other parties, particularly Colombians, have been turned back. The Colombian government set up in 1974 its 'Resguardo Indígena' (a bureau of protection for the Indian) at Valledupar, the starting point for most expeditions.

Poles are becoming more and more active in the Andes and it must be said in their praise that they most often try to secure the company of local mountaineers, something that few Western expeditions have so far bothered to do. Six Poles from Gdynia, reinforced by 3 Colombians made the first ascent of the S peak (ca 5150m) and the third of the highest (ca 5350m) of the Huila massif, in Central Colombia, in January 1976. The Gdynia party also climbed several other peaks in Eastern Colombia. In the latter district, Colombian university students made the second ascent of 'Ritacuba Negro' (ca 5400m), considered to be the most difficult peak in that area.

Ecuador

This is the one Andean country where local mountaineering is active and on the increase. New clubs have been founded and expert Marco Cruz and others vie for the conquest of the last unclimbed snow and ice peaks in the country. New peaks recently ascended by Ecuadorians have been Ayapungo (with its twin peaks 'Soroche' and 'Achipungo', both about 4650m high) and 'Fraile Oriental' (ca 5200m), the latter an important peak in the NE corner of the Altar massif. New routes on Quilindaña, Rumiñahui, Cotopaxi (a S to N traverse, probably the first ascent of the glaciated S face), etc, have also been inaugurated. There are at present in Ecuador 11 mountain clubs, which have set up a unified rescue service, based at Quito.

Peru

Since the Fifties, traditionally the Andean country that has been bearing the brunt of visiting expeditions to South America, Peru has continued in such a role, with its famed Cordillera Blanca receiving more than half of the share. In

[1] See *Zeitschrift für Gletscherkunde und Glazialgeologie* VIII, nr. 1–2 (1972), p. 189.



92 SE face of Chopicalqui, E arête on right (Photo: J. L. Brabet)

this fine range, the following new routes on major peaks can be listed as important ones:

1974: Huascarán Norte (6654m) NW ridge, by Italians.
Huantsán (6395m) E ridge, by French and Americans.
Huandoy Norte (6395m) NE face, by French.
1975: Palcaraju (6274m) W face, by French.
Ranrapalca (6162m) N face, by Americans.
Hualcán (6125m) SW ridge, by Americans.
1976: Pucaranra (6147m) Chinchey-Pucaranra col, by Spaniards.
Quitaraju (6036m) W ridge, by Americans.

Important new routes that were left unfinished were the W ridge of Nevado Santa Cruz (6259m) and the NW face of Huandoy Norte (6395m). On the latter, 2 Americans perished. In 1976 a French expedition failed on the unclimbed E ridge of Nevado Chopicalqui (6354m).

From the exploratory viewpoint, a Dutch party under Shreve brought new information about the still imperfectly known Huichajanca valley, NE of Hualcán.

The 'Parque Nacional Huascarán' was founded by the Peruvian government years ago and it is now beginning to function as a park.[2] One of the first pieces

[2] C. Morales Arnao, 'El Parque Nacional Huascarán', *Revista Peruana de Andinismo* nr 5 (1960–1961), pp 69–72; M. Rourke, 'Parque Nacional Huascarán, Cordillera Blanca, Peru,' *American Alpine Journal* 1976, pp 376–379.

of information received from this new park is that mountaineers, particularly from Western and Central European countries, have shown little regard for the place and carelessly leave big heaps of refuse. If this practice continues, it will result in new restrictions by the Peruvian government that could otherwise be avoided. American mountaineers have taken the initiative in cleaning the areas spoiled by previous expeditions.[3]

Other ranges. In the Cordillera Huayhuash, the steep E face of Sarapo (6143m) was climbed by Germans (1974) and the SW face by Italians (1975). The pretty mountain of Trapecio (5644m) has yielded 2 very fine routes: the SW spur to Italians (1974) and the NW ridge to a French party (1975). Italians have also climbed the NW face of Nevado Puscanturpa (5656m), an imposing Peruvian Paine style tower.

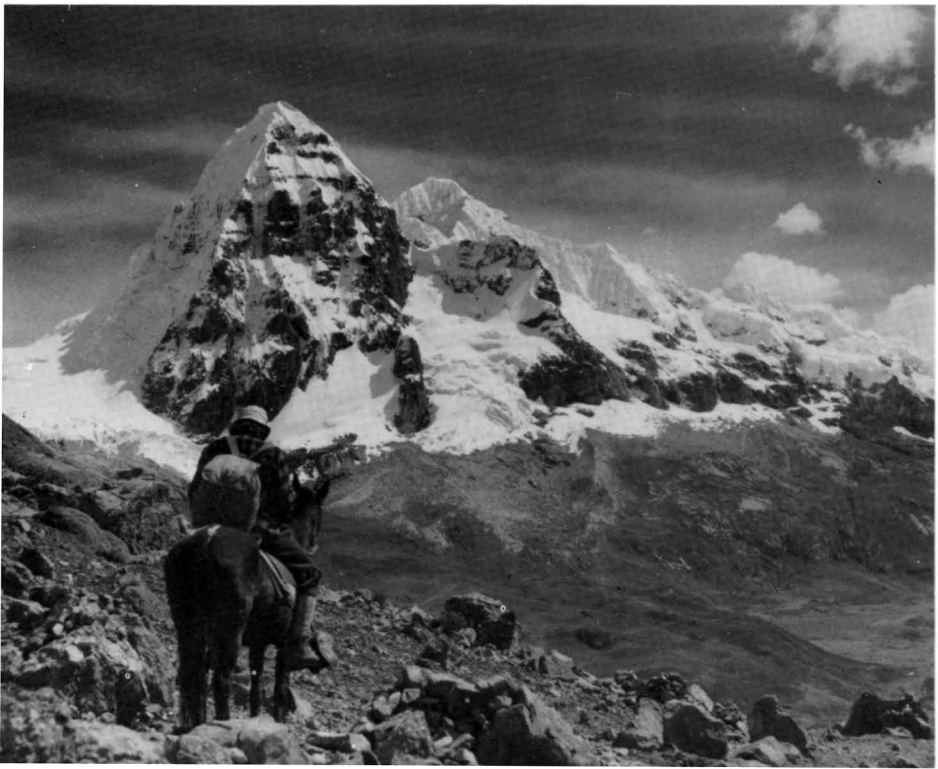
An interesting 'discovery' of a new range in Central Peru was made in 1973 by some Italians. The Millpo group was reckoned to be independent of its neighbouring ranges, the Huayhuash to the N and the Raura to the E. Later Italian parties from Como explored and climbed the main peaks of this range in 2 successive expeditions (1974 and 1975).[4]

Among the Southern Peruvian ranges, the Vilcanota has been the most

[3] Unfortunately, 2 American mountaineers, Curry Slaymaker and Michael Rourke, hired by the Peruvian government to supervise early operations in the park, fell to their deaths while attempting a new route on a peak in the Cordillera Blanca in 1976.

[4] *AJ* 1976, p 63 and *RM 1* (1975), pp 14–17 and 2 (1975), pp 93–99.

93 Nevados Trepecio and Sarapo from the SE (Photo: H. Adams Carter)



favoured by visitors. The New Zealand 1974 group, amply reported in this journal[5] concentrated on the Colquecruz massif, while a variety of parties have tackled a number of routes of varying calibre on the Azuncati peaks. Roaming Poles have also visited southern Peruvian ranges, their new NW route on Nevado Verónica (5894m) being the main accomplishment.

The Solimana massif in the Cordillera Occidental of Peru had hitherto offered a confusing topography. A German party under A. Roekl (1974) verified that 4 major peaks exist and that their heights were lower than expected (about 6100, 6070, 5900 and 5750m). All 4 were climbed by the explorers, the latter 2 having been previously untrodden.

As for Peruvian mountaineering itself, there are signs that the decline into which it has fallen since the late sixties has not been reversed. Reasons for this appear to be economic and not political, as in other countries in South America.

Bolivia

Expeditions that seek to harvest a large number of unclimbed peaks have disappeared and have been replaced by smaller groups (whether of seasoned mountaineers or climbing tourists) which are intent upon bagging instead an important mountain as well as several lesser ones in its neighbourhood. From the technical viewpoint the particular Bolivian peak that has yielded more new routes has been the white pyramid of Huayna Potosí (6094m), in the Cordillera

[5] *AJ* 1976, pp 245–8 and 4 articles in *NZAJ* 1975.

94 Nevado Huayna Potosí, W face (Photo: E. Echevarria)



Real, all of them to Americans: the NE ridge (R. Laba and J. Thackray, June 1974) and 2 on the W face. Mountaineering by Bolivians themselves has been negligible in the last 3 years, both for economic and political reasons.

Chile and Argentina

Not visited by foreign expeditions except in Patagonia, these 2 countries do not have important mountaineering events to be reported as far as the northern and central zones are concerned. In the northern section, or Puna, Indian traces were located, as expected and hoped for, on the summits of Cerro Colorado, 5742m (Chile) and Acay and Quéhuar in Argentina. On Acay (ca 5950m), Inca remains had been reported by expeditions as early as 1914. In 1975, an Argentinian party led by Rodolfo Ramos that was in search of a temporary shelter from a storm, found it among the ruins of an Indian hamlet located not far from the top. On Quéhuar (6160m) constructions up to 2.20m in height and 1.80m in thickness were found near the top. In one of the rooms the mummified body of a child, 10 to 12 years old, was uncovered. It lacked the skull and an arm, but it was dressed, and under its resting place there were several objects. The indefatigable Antonio Beorchia, an Italian settled in San Juan, Argentina, has continued to publish his bulletin of the Centro de Investigaciones Arqueológicas de Alta (high) Montaña, an institution devoted to recording discoveries about the mountaineering practised by the ancients.

The central ranges in both countries offer little worth mentioning. A party from Santiago made the first ascent of the unnamed mountain 5540m high in the Juncal massif. It was the second highest unclimbed summit in the area (Chilean side), the first being Cerro La Columna (5660m), in the same Juncal

95 Central Chile-Argentine. Left to right, Nevado del Plomo, unnamed peak, Cerro Risopatrón (This and next photo: M. Bazán)





96 The unclimbed SE face of Nevado del Plomo

massif. The climbers (Manuel Bazán and Giussepe degli Esposti) who reached the summit of '5540' were most impressed by the savage SE face of Nevado del Plomo (6050m), estimated to be 2000 to 2500m high.

Chilean and Argentinian mountaineering institutions are now facing stagnation which, if prolonged, may lead the sport into a long period of decadence. The new authoritarian governments that have taken power in both countries have not only closed many mountain valleys in which there are waterworks (one out of every 2 or 3 in Central Chile), but have also imposed in towns and cities curfew hours that are difficult for travelling parties to meet. As a result, there is little worth mentioning about local Chilean and Argentinian mountaineering, hitherto the most active, as well as the most technically advanced, in South America. Only the periphery of the Argentinian Patagonia has seen some important activity by local climbers.

Patagonia and Tierra Del Fuego

The main areas in which climbing activity has concentrated in the last 3 years have been the Fitz-Roy and Paine groups. Main ascents in these districts have been:

(1) Fitz-Roy–Cerro Torre:
Cerro Torre (3020m) First ascent (?), Italians, 1974.
Fitz-Roy (3375m) NE buttress, Italians, 1975.
Torre 'Egger' (ca 2900m (?)) First ascent, Anglo-American party, 1976.
Aguja 'Marmoz' (2574m) First ascent, Argentinians, 1974.
Unnamed ('Innominata' ca 2500m) First ascent, Anglo-American party, 1974.

(2) Paine:
Torre Central (ca 2460m) E face, South-Africans, 1974.
Cuerno Principal (2100m) Second ascent, Americans, 1976.
'Blade' (a tower N of the Cuernos), South-Africans, 1974.

Exploratory mountaineering in Patagonia has receded to a poor second place. Pioneer climbs worth mentioning are: 3 peaks, about 2000m high, or lower, in the Stokes group, just N of Paine, by a New Zealand party in 1974; Cerro 'Mascarello' (ca 2400m) and Cerro Moyano (2720m), both by Argentinian parties (1974 and 1976, the latter at the sixth attempt). The Shipton party ascended Cerro Curney (1768m) and a British expedition made the second ascent of Cerro Lautaro (3380m) and the first of a nearby volcanic summit, Cerro 'Mimosa' (no height given). As for Tierra del Fuego, only reports of importance are from the 3 Italian expeditions led by G. Agnolotti, a persistent visitor to the Andes, whose goal, the W peak of Sarmiento (ca 2100m) always defeated the climbers.

When appraising the last 3 years of Andean activity, it could be safely stated that, except for the Italian adventure in the Millpo group, mountaineering in South America has taken an inclination toward technical, instead of exploratory, climbing. The lessening of exploration in the Andes may also be due, among other reasons, to the opening of a vast, new and unexplored mountain country in Garhwal and the Karakoram. It is safe to predict that this present trend will continue for the next few years.

The opening of 2 large national parks in the Cordillera Blanca and Paine areas may mean an increase of visitors in certain selected districts. On the other hand, outside visitors may well find in the future good reasons for staying away from the Andes. The restrictions now applied to local climbers themselves by South American governments—restrictions so far not applied to foreigners—have been breeding among the locals a sort of xenophobia that may eventually surface. Furthermore, some South American mountaineers have pointed out that only expeditions from the Eastern European countries, and perhaps also from Japan, have been constantly inviting local climbers to join their groups as active members. In this respect, Western expeditions to the Andes have fallen well behind. Another problem is that posed by the difference in affluence between Western and local mountaineers. A case in point is the effect of the corruption brought by visiting expeditions to Arhuaco Indians who have closed access to the Santa Marta range in northern Colombia. Foreigners, with the aid of their strong currencies, have easily bribed the Indians, but Colombian climbers, usually with very modest funds, have been turned away from the

mountains of their own country. The reason for this is because the Arhuacos 'open their hearts only when they are shown a bill of high denomination and of a suggestive green colour,' wrote an infuriated Colombian mountaineer.[6]

Andean literature has in the last 3 years been unevenly produced. Andean journals are at present for economic reasons not being published. But climbing in the Andes has been on the average very well reported in foreign journals (*American Alpine Journal, Mountain, Rivista Mensile*), although not so in books. It has been left to the Italians and, to a lesser extent, to those new and ambitious visitors to the Andes, the Poles, to publish the more important Andean books for the last triennium.[7]

[6] Declarations of Manuel Hernández and Antonio Curcio to *El Espectador* (Bogota), 15 February, 1976, p 18-A.

[7] G. Agnolotti, *Sarmiento, inferno bianco* (Torino: Rattero, 1973); C. Ferrari, *Cerro Torre, parete ovest* (Milano: Dall'Oglio, 1975); Società Alpinisti Tridentini, *Nevado Caras* (Club Alpino Italiano, 1973); H. Furmanik, *W peruwianskich kordylierach* (Warsaw: Wiedza Powszechna, 1974); T. Piaty, editor, *Himalaje-Karakorum* (Katowice: Slask, 1975); last book mentioned covers Polish expeditions abroad, with 4 chapters on the Andes. Other Polish Andean books by W. Ostrowski (Patagonia) and the Gdynia Mountaineering and Speleological Society (Colombia) are to appear in 1977. It should perhaps be mentioned here that the Ecuadorian newspaper *El Comercio* (Quito) published in its Sunday edition and between August and December 1975, excellent monographs on individual Ecuadorian peaks, with good photos, up-to-date information and sketch-maps.

Events and Trends 1974–6 South Africa

Michael Scott

South African cragmanship is characterized by an elaborately maintained veneer of non-competitiveness, which has been challenged for its complacent, levelling effect, although it is unparalleled in preserving a record of safe climbing.

The equipment revolution, which induced climbers to climb bolstered by nylon and alloy hope instead of technique, has prompted a renewed query into the responsibility of shops which sell equipment, to ensure some form of education at point of sale.

The declaration of more Wilderness areas has hampered climbing activity, notably in the Cedarberg and Drakensberg, while the opening of National hiking ways through the major ranges has had the opposite effect, and carried the population explosion into the mountains. Petrol restrictions and its rising price may still have a more significant long-term effect on visits to country areas than has been seen to date.

Western Cape

The past $2\frac{1}{2}$ years has seen renewed enthusiasm for opening major routes and repeating existing ones.