

A New Route on Huascarán's East Face

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ORIGINALLY the Academic Section, Vienna of the Austrian Alpine Club (ÖAV) had planned an expedition to the Karakoram (Gasherbrum III or Batura). Because of political difficulties after the Indian-Pakistani war, an entry permit from the Pakistani government was never granted. We had to choose a new objective just weeks before our planned departure date. A worthy goal was the east face of Huascarán in the Cordillera Blanca of Peru.

On June 30 we flew to Lima and drove by bus to Carhuás in the Santa valley. After a day-and-a-half's march up the Quebrada Ulta, on July 8 we set up Base Camp at 14,100 feet in the Quebrada Matara at the foot of Huascarán's east face.

The east face is a gigantic wall of rock and ice, three miles broad, which towers 4000 feet above Quebrada Matara. We were not at that time aware that the Anzus (Australia, New Zealand, U.S.) expedition had climbed the left-central (south) side of the face in 1971 (*A.A.J.*, 1972, 18:1, pages 30-34). We discovered this on our return to Europe.

Our plan was to force a route up the right-central part of the wall a little north of the fall-line from the summit. The route had two distinct parts: a 3000-foot-high ice face from its base at 17,700 feet up to 20,700 feet and a 1150-foot-high rock wall from 20,700 to 21,850 feet. Because of the obvious difficulties in the upper quarter, the rock wall, we could not hope to climb the route in a single, alpine-style attack. Consequently we placed 4500 feet of fixed rope, 50 ice screws and aluminum pickets and 50 rock pitons on the lower face.

Route preparation occupied us from June 8 until the 22nd. On the top of a big moraine stood Camp I at 16,750 feet. We built Camp II, the Ice Palace, some 1300 feet up the wall at 19,000 feet in a huge crevasse in the face.

On July 25 Hasitschka, Lackner, Pollet, Schulz and I left Camp II for the final attack. At ten A.M. we reached the bottom of the rock wall. Our suspicion that the summit wall would be the most difficult was borne out. It was a terribly hard struggle. Frightfully rotten, iced rock, dizzily jutting balconies over or around which we had to climb, falling rock and ice, frigid cold, all combined to keep us climbing well into the night.

Schulz's camera was smashed when a rock fell on it from high above. A rock avalanche swept away the fixed ropes below us on the ice face. Our planned descent route back down the way we had ascended was no longer feasible.

After fourteen hours on the rock wall, we emerged at midnight on the summit plateau, now bathed in the light of the full moon. But we were exhausted, near the breaking point.

It was a tight squeeze for five of us in a single bivouac tent. At day-break on July 26 we began the descent down the normal route on the western side of the mountain, with which none of us was acquainted. Right below the Garganta, the col between Huascarán's north and south summits, Schulz sprained his ankle jumping a crevasse. It was no easy job for us, supporting Schulz on both sides, to reach the lower glacial region by midnight. A second bivouac! On the evening of the 27th we finally reached the first villages of the Santa valley.

Not until August 1 had we all climbed back up the *quebradas* to Base Camp on the opposite side of Huascarán. We were a sorry lot. Schulz was severely injured; I fell sick; several of us had frozen fingers and toes. Our second objective, Chopicalqui's east face would have to wait.

Summary of Statistics:

AREA: Cordillera Blanca, Peru.

NEW ROUTE: A second route on the East Face of Huascarán, 22,208 feet, July 26, 1972 (Hasitschka, Koblmüller, Lackner, Pollet, Schulz).

PERSONNEL: Eduard Koblmüller, leader; Dietmar Entlesberger, Sepp Hasitschka, Erich Lackner, Christoph Pollet, Roland Schulz, *Austrians*; Michael Gizycki, *German*.