

Cerro Presidente, Attempt and Tragedy. On September 25 at 8:30 a.m., Yossi Brain and a young Canadian woman, Dana Witzel, were killed in a slab avalanche on Cerro Presidente (5700m) in the Apolobamba range of the Andes. Four of us, Yossi, Dana, Eric Lawrie and myself, had gone into the range, near Pelechuco, the day before and set up a high camp on the long flat glacier below Cerro Presidente, Cerro Apollo 11 and Cerro Radioaficionado. We had planned to attempt two or three new routes on these peaks during two days at high camp. The week before we had had an unseasonably long period of rains and snow in the high mountains, but the snow conditions on the glaciers were relatively good.

Yossi and Dana set out on one rope about five minutes before Eric and I and reached the base of the 300-meter headwall before us. They started up the lower low-angle wall on the right-hand side, encountering knee-deep snow some 50 meters up; at this point the wall had an inclination of some 30 to 40 degrees. Meanwhile, seeing the snow conditions, Eric and I circled around the small bowl at the base of the wall on firm snow to attempt the left-hand side. I yelled to Yossi our intentions. He then started moving to his left; I think that he was looking for firmer snow on steeper ground, both to make climbing easier and to avoid avalanche danger. About ten steps to the left, as I was watching him, he kicked into the still-deep snow and a large horizontal crack, about 50 meters above him and some 100 meters long, appeared suddenly. A slab avalanche engulfed them both and carried them some 50 meters down to the bowl below the wall. As the avalanche settled, we saw Dana's lower leg rise up once and fall back down. We immediately headed for that spot and uncovered Dana within 15 minutes and started cardiopulmonary resuscitation until we were unable to continue. We were unable to resuscitate her. After resting, we followed the rope and uncovered Yossi, who was buried under one and a half meters of snow in the heaviest part of the avalanche. We moved the bodies further down the slope, covered them well to protect them from birds and descended the mountain.

The next day, a group of guides taking an annual course under the direction of two French guides from Chamonix arrived to effect the body recovery, which went as smoothly and efficiently as anything I have witnessed in Bolivia. Yossi's remains are to be cremated in La Paz and his ashes scattered on Illimani, the mountain that is the symbol of La Paz and which rises majestically over the city. Dana's remains are to be returned to Canada, accompanied by her brother.

DAKIN COOK

CORDILLERA DE COCAPATA

Cordillera de Cocapata, Exploratory Climbing. My attention was drawn to the Cordillera de Cocapata near Cochabamba by Evelio Echevarría's description of its granite peaks as a potential "rock climbers' playground" (see "Cordillera de Cocapata, Bolivia" in *The Alpine Journal* 102, pp. 154-160). The temptation to play proved irresistible. Ignoring dismissive remarks from Yossi Brain ("No snow, shite rock, why bother?") and relying on first-hand accounts such as 1911 visitor Herzog's "bizarrely formed peaks," "steep rocky horns" and "extraordinarily impressive black tower" and Echevarría's "excellent gray granite" and "long, steep slabs," the Yorkshire Ramblers' Club mustered five climbers (David Hick, Tim Josephy, Duncan Mackay, Rory Newman and Michael Smith) to visit the range. We spent two weeks among the 5000-meter peaks as one part of a larger, six-week trip encompassing Peru, Bolivia and Chile. We were the first climbing team into the Cordillera de Cocapata since 1911.

Ten hours' driving from La Paz, an overnight roadside camp and two hours spent skirting the range saw our small group at Peñas on the northern side of the central group with all requisite



Cerro Willpanki I seen from the south across Poma Apacheta and an intervening low ridge. Willpanki's slabs are unclimbed. Josephy and Thellache ascended the left skyline. MICHAEL SMITH

food and fuel. Within the hour, our fixer-cum-climber, Javier Thellache, had a local family providing horses and porters for the several kilometers' pull up toward the lakes below the Jatúncasa-Sankhayuni group. There is no local infrastructure to support mountaineering, so the family was convinced we were seeking gold or gems, hunting, poaching their trout or intent on making a film. Camped by Lago Chacapata (4450m) on alpaca grazing ground, we enjoyed good weather with only a few hours of snow in two weeks. The 12 hours of daylight invariably saw the sun shining throughout to raise the temperature well above freezing (though the light to moderate winds were chilling, especially in

the shade). Excellent meals were prepared using much better quality food than I had been able to find on previous visits. Distractions from climbing included passing alpaca herds and herders, condors and caracaras squabbling over a pony carcass and a small earthquake.

Jatuncasa provided easy angled slab climbing (40°) for 500 meters with poor protection but was probably not Herzog's Incachaca as previously supposed. The descent, as with most of the climbs, was loose and involved abseils. Sankhayuni's main top was probably Herzog's peak and was gained via two chimney gullies. The second summit was climbed in four unprotected pitches while the fifth gave the soundest rock in the area and a contorted route to find the true top on this serrated ridge. Willpanki required a small camp distant from our base and yielded interesting conversations with a local hunter and farmer. The attractive long steep slabs to the east await another visit. We pioneered routes on the southwest ridge of the main peak (despite considerable amounts of poor rock, so OK, Yossi, you were right) and the obvious cold, shaded southwest ridge on Willpanki II. Mountain scrambling over new ground was found on Malpasso and unnamed peaks south of Willpanki and Pututini in the north. The area provided easily accessible exploratory climbing unlikely to give anyone a world class reputation. Andean Summits provided excellent logistical support and are aware of other "off the beaten track" areas.

MICHAEL SMITH, *Yorkshire Ramblers' Club*

SANTA VERA CRUZ

Pico de la Fortuna, Ascent, and Cerro Santa Vera Cruz, Ascent and Discovery. The Santa Vera Cruz is the smallest range in Bolivia. With an extension of only 20 kilometers between the villages of Huanacota on the north and Ichoco on the south, these mountains, which carry the south-