

*Mercedario, Central Andes.* Five Chileans attempted Mercedario (21,884 feet) but hindered by deep snow, they made slow progress. On February 10 only two of the group, Julián Bilbao and Gastón Muga, reached the top. They had used the western approach, entering from Chile by the Pelambres Pass and connecting with the Polish route of 1934 in the last 4000 feet. This is thought to be the 14th ascent of the mountain.

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*Expeditions in Patagonia.* News has been very slow in arriving from the south and is (in late February) still quite incomplete. It appears that activity in the southern Andes has as always been badly hampered by the weather. There was only one period of good weather, from December 26 until January 5, 1968. This period favored the English on La Fortaleza in the Paine group. Various expeditions operated in the FitzRoy area. The English party of Douglas Haston, Peter Crew, Mike Burke, Martin Boysen with the Argentine José Luis Fonrouge attempted Cerro Torre. During the good weather, they prepared the route to a point high on the peak. From there they were going to have to turn away from their direct line and swing south, but the bad weather forced them to stop after much rope had been fixed. When Fonrouge left Patagonia, the French were still besieging FitzRoy by the northeast pillar. Of the 6500 feet of the pillar, they had climbed only 2000 feet and so their success seems doubtful. The Italians were attempting St. Exupéry, a relatively low tower; possibly they were successful.<sup>1</sup> Fonrouge with companions from Buenos Aires failed to climb Poincenot but did climb Cerro Solo, possibly a third or fourth ascent. Others from the Centro Andino Buenos Aires repeated the ascent of Adela Sur, which had been climbed by Jorge Aikes, Omar Pellegrini and Nestor Monaco last year. The latter reached the summit on March 1, 1967 after an attempt on February 23 and 25. (Bonatti and Mauri made the first ascent in 1958.) The Skvarca brothers are on Cerro Norte. On January 5 they were high on the peak when

1. Since this was received, one of our assistant editors, Evelio Echevarría has provided the following information: "The Italian expedition led by Piero Nava and composed of Pietro Bergamelli, Andrea Cattaneo, Mario Curnis and Mario Dotti has made the first ascent of Cerro El Escudo (The Shield; 8858 feet), in the Paine massif. The ascent took place on January 31. It was exceedingly difficult because of blasts of wind up to 80 mph and because of technical difficulties. They used 3500 feet of fixed rope and 200 pitons. A Chilean group of the Universidad de Chile made a first ascent of one of the Cuernos de Paine (7700 feet), but it is not clear which one. The team was formed by Eduardo García, Raúl Aguilar, Osvaldo Latorre and Gastón Oyarzún.