

A fight to the death between a man and a condor seems incredible, but the author took snapshots proving that he really made the journey here described.

On Horseback through the Andes

By MARIO APPELIUS

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I AM ACCOMPANYING an engineer on a mining expedition through the Andes between Chile and Argentina, and we plan to penetrate the mountain range at one of its most majestic and solitary points, a region still untouched by train or automobile, an undisputed kingdom of the condor and the horse. We are given two ponies, plain, sturdy creatures, which the engineer has borrowed from a well-to-do friend who watches over a herd of cattle and sheep from his colonial mansion in the mountains.

'Your horses are ready,' he announces in his gaucho dialect as he points to a group of ponies grazing in the pasture. 'Choose the ones you want. They are young beasts who know their way in the mountains, but they don't like spurs and they do need water.'

Vigorous and sensitive to the bit, these Chilean mountain horses can pick their way like wild goats over the rocks and they know how to find food for themselves in mountain pastures while their masters cook breakfast on the bank of some stream.

After a two days' journey we leave the broad lowlands behind us and arrive at the higher valleys. At night we sleep in such cabins as we encounter along the road, making use of the proverbial hospitality of the Andes, and if we do not find a house we make ourselves as comfortable as we can under the open sky, wrapped in warm ponchos, with cowboy saddles as our pillows. On the third morning we rise at dawn and climb up a trail that winds through the rocks like some empty

river bed. At noon we arrive at an inhabited pasture ground, where a large herd of sheep are nibbling thin grass. Several hairy dogs are on guard, snarling when the sheep stray too far and driving them back, pushing and barking. A man, woman, and child live here: the man is very old, wrinkled, and weather-beaten, but he still appears strong; the woman, handsome, solid, and brown, is swathed in rags from which bare arms and legs emerge. They seem to be father and daughter and sit down near us on a large rock before the shelter made of sticks and tin which serves as their home. The boy is playing with the lambs and as we pass he turns his dirty, smeared face in our direction.

This child of the mountains must be the son of the woman and grandson of the old man, a descendant of generations of shepherds, magnificent Chilean rangers with knowledge of sheep-breeding in their blood. These people are familiar with all the habits and tricks of their beasts, their weaknesses and ills, and the dangers from which they must be protected. They regulate their mating and their shearing and change their altitude and their pastures in accordance with laws that have been passed down from father to son. They rise with the sun and fling themselves to rest late at night, zealously watching the landowner's flock, aided by their dogs and horses, children and women, defending themselves and their charges from condors, pumas, and foxes, and receiving as their reward for this miserable existence meagre wages which they scrupulously hoard in order to achieve the ideal of their lives—the possession of a patch of fertile soil and an adobe hut, with a portion of roast pig thrown in now and then.

WE STOP to have a bite to eat in their company and make friends over a little bread and wine. They offer us a piece of very salty cheese, hard as rock, and a glass of water which the child brings us in his dirty hands from a stream of newly melted snow.

‘How are the flocks, my friend?’

‘Good wool, little meat. The grass is scarce this year and there aren’t many lambs.’

‘You must have lived up here a good many years.’

‘Seventy-two, but I’m still able to work for my daughter and the boy.’

The frowning, motionless woman hardly notices us. We are not shepherds, and are therefore strangers, perhaps enemies. Seen from here the Andes present an endless array of peaks, interspersed with valleys and pastures. The undulating mass slopes down to the plains, capriciously shooting up again here and there toward the sky. The old man, taciturn like all shepherds, silently smokes his root pipe, while the woman slowly goes about her household duties in the hut. Agile as a

squirrel, the boy climbs up a rock, where a lamb which has wandered after a spear of grass now stands marooned, wailing for its mother.

Toward night, in a valley near the Chilean border, we meet a noisy group of mounted cowboys driving a herd of cows and calves from a village on the other side of the Andes. The party, which consists of three Chilean *huasos* and a single Argentine gaucho, is escorting a herd of nearly two hundred heads. The men camp for the night on a small meadow and turn the beasts loose to pasture, giving their dogs the task of keeping them together. They have built a fire with a few sticks and twigs and are roasting a quartered lamb on two posts stuck in the ground. We quickly make their acquaintance and even more quickly make friends, for such is the custom in the mountains. Hardly has the sun disappeared behind the vague immensity of the rolling hills when suddenly a quarrel breaks out between one of the *huasos* and the gaucho. This is an everyday affair, however, due to the traditional enmity between Chileans and Argentines and the implacable professional pride of the *huasos* and gauchos, both of whom claim supremacy in their handling of horses. For these men can work side by side for weeks on end, sharing hardships and dangers, but whenever a throw of the lasso or an unruly horse or bull tests their skill their racial spirit embitters them at once and brings an old conflict to the surface.

The two rivals in our party are emphatically discussing the relative merits of Argentine and Chilean horseflesh.

'The Argentine horse is only good for plains! He's not worth a Chilean horse in the mountains!'

'You're crazy! What does a *huaso* know about horses?'

'Well, how much does an Argentine know, who has to hang on to the pommel for fear of being thrown from the saddle?'

'That's a lie, you llama tamer!'

'Liar yourself, you guitar player!'

'I'll smash your face in!'

'Try and do it, you tango dancer!'

The quarrel ends in silence and seems to be forgotten, but a few minutes later a noise of fighting and swearing makes us run behind a rock to watch the two adversaries grimly attacking each other with fists and boots, teeth and heads, breaking their ribs and jaws for the honor of their national horses. It takes all our strength to pull the two bleeding men apart, and even then they still hurl insults at each other as their dark eyes gleam savagely. Presently, however, silence again prevails, broken only by the barking of dogs. One by one the four men roll themselves up in their ponchos and fall asleep among their saddles to dream of horses, herds, cockfights, and brawls.

The night is too beautiful and my bed too hard for sleep. The hours pass slowly, swimming in silence. Suddenly a rustle makes me turn my

head and I see one of the men arise. It is the gaucho. He goes to the horses and silently saddles his own, placing his great gaucho pack on its back. He then coils his lasso, puts on the bridle and leaps into the saddle, sinking his spurs into the beast, who gallops away. Half an hour later I perceive his black figure on the edge of a distant precipice: man and horse fused in a single proud, poetic outline that dominates the solitude of the Andes.

WHILE the engineer I am accompanying calculates with the patience of a monk and the imagination of a poet the possible location of the ore he is seeking, upon whose problematical existence seventy-two shareholders in Santiago are building castles in Spain, I permit myself the luxury of wandering among the rocky hills. In our lonely situation, high above the valley pastures, the condor builds its nest, which the male guards during the nesting season, standing on a rock while the female crouches over the four sticks that surround her great bluish eggs. Often when these birds are hungry they swoop down upon the flocks, sometimes the male alone, sometimes the female likewise, if the male is too slow. Often they carry off lambs, gripping them in their ponderous talons while the terrorized mother sheep runs away bleating desperately. Occasionally they even attack newly born calves, frightening the cows with their strident cries, but the shepherds come out armed with torches to defend their flocks and the goats also join the fray, since they can sometimes kill a condor with a single blow of their horns. Rarely do these birds attack a man, though stories have been told of famished condors who assaulted boys and even adults.

A few years ago many condors preyed upon Chilean sheep and their great black shapes could often be seen on hilltops, outlined against the sky. Now, however, shepherds have exterminated most of these birds by attracting them to earth with carrion placed in appropriate spots, and then beating them with cudgels when they have become heavy with food. For the condor's rigid wings are oversized and they cannot rise quickly in flight, but must take a preliminary run like an airplane before they can raise themselves aloft. Reduced in numbers and made wary by continual danger, the condors have therefore retired to the highest reaches of the Andes, to inaccessible volcano peaks and immaculate crevices of ice, where they live on llamas, fawns, foxes, and wild kids, only descending to the valleys when they are driven by hunger, or when the passage of a large herd of sheep awakens their greed.

I make my way to the top of a jutting cliff that seems to float in space and I grow dizzy gazing at the interminable chaos of mountain peaks below. It is a pleasure—both moral and physical—to breathe pure air that no human lungs have profaned and that is reserved for the condor

only. Certainly I am quite alone here between the snow and the sun, but as I look over at a neighboring promontory I see coming toward me a man who seems to have sprung from the rock itself. He is a Chilean tramp, as I recognize from the picturesque rags that cover him, from his great feet shod in rotten leather, from the curved knife stuck in his belt, but above all from his stony half-breed countenance, which combines the passivity of the Indian and the alertness of the Spaniard. What has this man come up here for? He salutes me with a gesture that is at once humble and proud and that flatters me yet makes me take care not to offend him.

‘Good morning.’

‘G’ morning.’

The man continues his walk among the rocks, cautious as a smuggler in fear of customs officers. But what can he steal up here? He carries under his arm a bag that is full of something. I then see him stop, crouch, crawl, lie flat, advance warily, grope here and there among the rocks, and finally stick his hand into a crevice, softly drawing out some living object. Now I know what he is—a condor hunter, who steals young birds and eggs from their nests.

I FOLLOW him from a distance, eager to learn the secrets of his curious occupation. The morning passes slowly. The distant peaks are clearly outlined against the steel-blue horizon and the scene about me reveals in all its horror the millennial torment of the rock, tortured by wind and ice, scarred, corroded, chiseled and split, or in some places rubbed to glassy smoothness by the continual friction of wind and water. In the crevices of these highest rocks condors hide their nests, choosing by instinct the most vertical cliffs and inaccessible pinnacles. But they fail to take into account the desperate skill of my mysterious hunter, who knows how to go like a sleepwalker along the edges of precipices.

But suddenly a drama reveals itself before my horror-stricken eyes, and I involuntarily cry out for help from the peak on which I am standing, not far from the man, to be sure, yet hopelessly separated from him by a deep abyss. He has climbed like a goat to an almost vertical pinnacle where his hunter’s instinct has detected the presence of a nest. The pinnacle comes to a sharp point, in whose summit the snow has carved a little channel and this cavity, hung aloft between two chasms, has been chosen by some condor for its nest, for I see the man gently gathering from it two large blue objects that are almost the shape of ostrich eggs.

While I am admiring him as he kneels there on his pedestal, like a statue of formidable power, a great shadow suddenly falls upon him.

The next instant I see an enormous bird poised directly overhead. The condor! It is a superb creature with wide black wings almost nine feet across. Its long neck is the color of coagulated blood and it has an angular yellow beak. The man, surprised and without a gun, turns to face his winged foe, standing with sublime courage, close to death, gripping his curved Chilean knife in his left hand. The duel between man and bird on this high pedestal is extraordinarily beautiful to see. Twice the man strikes at the creature's breast with his knife but each time the condor escapes the blow with a rapid beating of his great wings, while his talons reach down but do not touch their mark, though his beak grazes his enemy's flesh.

The position of the hunter is extremely difficult as he has barely a square foot to move in and the abyss surrounds him on every side. Each onrush of the bird exposes him to the danger of falling, but he defends himself from its frenzied attacks. The horrible, strident cries of the condor fill the air. Nailed impotently to my rock, frozen yet trembling with emotion, I watch this fantastic encounter which seems to turn the world back for centuries and millenniums, recalling the ancient battles between the first human beings and the beasts of sea, land, and air.

The man wards off a third attack but neither contestant has yet been wounded. At this point the condor with a few powerful strokes of his wings rises to a height of some hundred feet, describes a perfect circle over the hunter's head and then descends like a solid weight on his shoulders. For I do not know how many seconds, the man and the condor form a single frenzied mass, a monstrous mingling of wings and arms, claws and legs, beak and human head, a turmoil of feathers and rags, bits of wool and drops of blood.

And then something falls down into the abyss and that something is the man. I see his poor body crash many yards below on a point of rock, then roll down a steep slope to the bottom of the chasm, accompanied by some loose stones that rattle mockingly after.

I raise my eyes. On the tragic pinnacle the condor is shrieking his victory, flapping his great wings over the abyss as his blood-soaked head projects imperially into space.

AS OTHERS SEE US

AMERICA AND THE SOVIET

UNDER THIS TITLE André Chaumeix of *Le Figaro* discusses with some alarm the encouragement that the Russian Five-Year Plan of Economic Development has received in the United States. François Coty, the millionaire perfume maker who owns the paper in which these opinions appear, is a consistent enemy of the present Russian government:—

The Soviets have established an economic plan that is supposed to improve the general situation of the country within the next five years. But when they moved from theory to practice the authors of this plan turned to America. They borrowed its methods, they summoned its engineers, they dealt with big American firms. The *New York Herald*, commenting on these events, congratulates the Soviets on rivaling the capitalist powers. It declares that if Russia, with all its wealth, is producing at the maximum of its power within the next few years humanity will benefit greatly. It might be added that America will benefit greatly, too.

Since the Peace Treaty, America's foreign policy has been developing swiftly and consistently. A great nation, young, ardent, and powerful, is naturally tempted to seize every chance that destiny offers. Politically, the United States has no interest in European affairs. It refuses to enter any entanglements, wishing to avoid all responsibility in case of difficulty or conflict. Its attitude toward the Versailles Treaty and the League of Nations was not the result of luck or capriciousness. It was a *parti pris*, officially justified by long-standing doctrines and frankly explained to the public.

But economically the Americans do not ignore Europe and do not mean to ignore any part of the Old World. They find there an immense field for their

activities, a productive outlet for their capital. After they succeed in making themselves masters, even in part, of the soil and subsoil of Russia they will occupy a position of the first importance between Europe and Asia. They will guard the very gates of Asia. *Humanité* [the official Communist organ] lately pointed out the sympathy that American democrats have manifested for Gandhi's movement and their hopes for an enormous market for American products if India gains independence.

What will England do? The England of Kipling, the England whose empire extends over the seven seas, the England of unlimited credit and universal business is governed by Mr. MacDonald, head of the Labor Party. Contrary to all its past traditions, beliefs, and desires it has abandoned naval supremacy to America. For the first time it will no longer dominate the Atlantic. The famous London Conference has made this fact clear to an astounded universe. American policy in Russia and American policy in London are two aspects of the same problem and it is at this very moment that Mr. Henderson is painfully negotiating with the Soviets an economic agreement that is arousing the criticism of all those Britishers who cherish the memory of their empire's tutelary rule and their faith in her destiny. To Europe, whose culture, civilization, and moderation have long dominated the world, it is a distressing spectacle, this entrance of America upon the world scene and this evolution of England under the influence of Socialism.

NEW YORK THROUGH AUSTRIAN EYES

DR. ADOLF LORENZ, the renowned Viennese specialist who spends part of every year in New York, has set down a few of his impressions of the great American metropolis for the benefit of his fellow townsmen. He is appalled by apart-