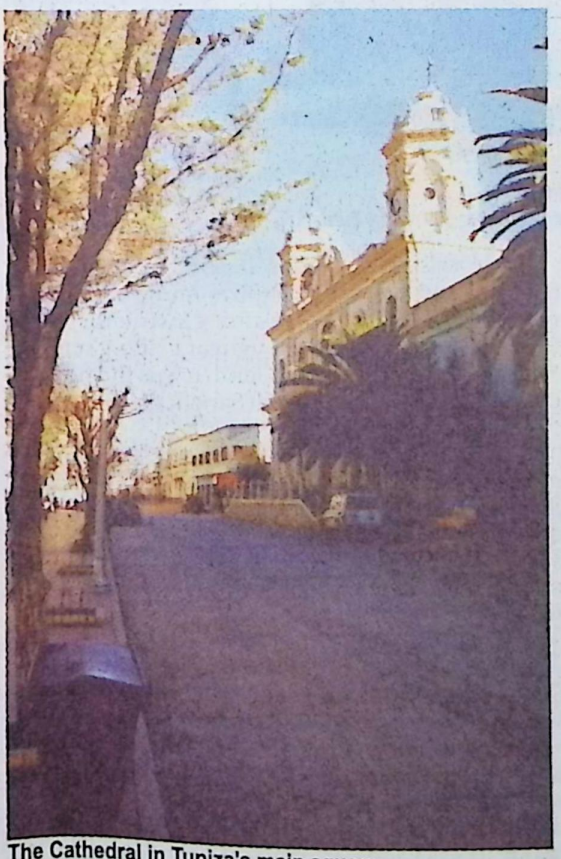
drinks, to take the edge off the Thai afternoon humidity. Across the river were the distant houses and tiny motor cars of Laos; on the river were long canoe-like fishing boats. It's strange I happened to chat with Annie; that Annie was there: she was exactly the person to resolve the riddle of Sanchez, from that long ago day.

Tupiza, Bolivia

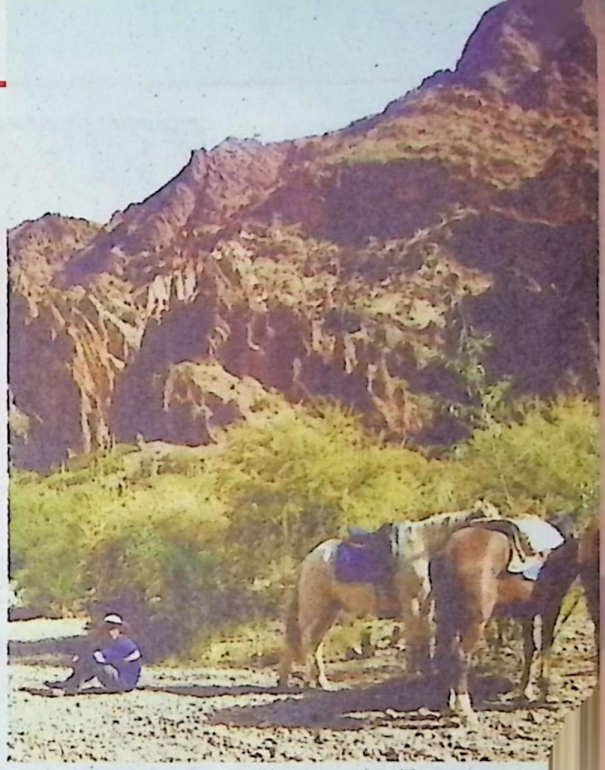
Come to think of it, Tupiza, my first full day in Bolivia, never quite fit with the image of a faraway land. You don't imagine, for example, finding lunch in a small restaurant by the main square, having to knock on the door to wake up the staff from their afternoon siesta, only to sit at a red and blue vinyl bench eating pizza to the sound of Boney M's *By the Rivers of Babylon*. It's a little off-putting.

Still, I clambered boulders at the edge of town, followed a goat trail past the Stations of the Cross to a hilltop. The mountains are thousand-pleated like the inside of lung, ironic given the altitude's shortness of breath. To the south, three red rock houses with little stone goat yards clung to a canyon wall; to the east, a cemetery of white crosses, artificial flowers and tinsel. To the west, traffic uninterested in Tupiza's bridge drove instead along the dry riverbed.

I followed a veinlike gully that zigzagged into the hills, in parts so narrow you could touch both



The Cathedral in Tupiza's main square.



Sanchez and his friends with our local guide.

walls at once. The rocks were pebble-filled, the olive green willows lit by the shard of late afternoon sky contrasted with rock red. Shadows climbed canyon walls. The air was still.

There was a stand-off in that canyon, but it wasn't a pistol-toting Pinkerton detective that found me; rather a Doberman that suddenly appeared from around a bend, barking ferociously and running wildly in my direction. The canyon walls too steep to climb, I tried to recall all I knew of dogs and did the only thing worth doing. I stood still.

Fortunately, seconds short of my leg entering its mouth and needing several rabies shots, the dog baulked. My bluff worked. Soon its human arrived, yelling, managing to ward it off. Did they have wild Dobermans in the Wild Wild West?

Like me, Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid started their South American adventures in Argentina. Unlike me, they would appear to have staged their biggest bank robbery of all, in Rio Gallegos in 1905, making off to the north and eventually hiding out in Bolivia. Witnesses recalled two English speaking bandits.

At San Vicente outside Tupiza in 1908 came the showdown. Trapped in a house, three soldiers of the Abaroa Regiment of the Bolivian Army's cavalry, the police chief and local officials sought to arrest the fugitives. The bandits opened fire. There was a gunfight until, at 2 a.m., from inside the house two shots were heard, minutes apart. Two dead, bullet-ridden bodies were later found. It appeared that one had shot the other, who was probably already mortally wounded, before turning the gun on himself.