FIRST EVER ACROSS THE HIMALAYAS BY MOTOR TRANSPORT

In reality the earliest record of motor transport of having not only surmounting but also having crossed the great Himalaya Range was made by half tracks of the Trans Asiatic Harrdt-Cintrogen Expedition in crossing the 14,000 ft high Burzil and other passes between Srinagar and Gilgit and beyond in 1931.

The half tracks performed very well in deserts as well as river crossings on their own power. Despite expert opinion at Srinagar that the expedition with its halftracks will never be able to make up to Gilgit, the expedition left Srinagar on Trans Himalayan journey on 12th July 1931 with only two of its half tracks supplemented by ponies/mules and porters for transportation of equipment, including horses for vehicles, fuel, supplies and other things.

Going was very smooth for the half tracks between Srinagar to Gurez, but beyond Gurez lot of difficulties were met with in ascending the Burzil Pass in waist deep snow and in talus and scree covered slopes on the north face of the Himalayas; especially between Godoi and Bunji where fresh landslides and rock falls had had eliminated the track. At places the half tracks were hauled with ropes to prevent side slipping. At places the half tracks were dismantled and carried in parts on porters over small bridges and badly damaged portions of the tracks. One of the cars near Astor was got stranded on its front wheels and right track while the road under the left track collapsed was retrieved almost by a miracle. Beyond Gilgit between Nomal and Chalt, with the time left at the disposal of the expedition and limit of having reached the limit of motorable tracks the half tracks were abandoned and expedition proceeded with ponies, mules the only means of practicable transport after crossing the Karakoram Range. The expedition used 60 double humped camels, 80 ponies/mules and in due course of time reached Kashgar (Kasi) in Sinkiang (modern Xinjiang) on 19th September 1931. The journey eastwards was continued in half tracks of the China group which met them on 24th October and reached Beijing on 12th Feb 1932. The expedition eventually traveled to Vietnam unfortunately losing its leader George Harrdt at Hongkong due to pneumonia.

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