

Che Guevara A Brief History

by Greg Oviatt

One year ago today, an extremely sensitive man, who was formally educated as a physician and informally as a revolutionary was murdered in Quebrada del Yuro, Bolivia, by military tyrants. Guerrilla Major Ernesto Che Guevara was born on June 14, 1928, son of an education official who persuaded Che to enter medicine. At the age of 26, he left Argentina which, by now, had fallen under the fascist rule of Peron, to practice medicine among the Indians in Bolivia.

It was during this period that Che first became interested in the social revolution which the situation in Latin America demanded. (Che was 28 then -- there's still hope for all you business majors!) The United States was, at this time, interfering with an attempted overthrow of power in Guatemala which threatened to socialize the land owned by the United Fruit Company. Che volunteered his services in the interest of humanity to the revolutionaries. The history of Latin America will never be the same.

After the defeat of the popular Guatemalan forces by the CIA backed government forces, an entirely new Che Guevara wandered into Mexico. He was convinced that all Latin countries faced a common enemy; the imperialism of the North sustained by local tyrannies, and that this oppressive force would have to be met by the force of the people, by revolutionary force. While in Mexico, he became acquainted with Fidel Castro and the extremely repressive conditions with which the Cubans had to put up with under the rule of Fulgencio Batista. When Fidel suggested a liberation attempt, Che later admitted that his purpose for joining was somewhat stimulated by purely romantic sentiment. The GRANMA expedition was to harden whatever romanticism was left in Che into pure revolutionary fervor; out of the initial group of 83, Che was one of the 15 or so who managed to find each other in the Sierra Maestra.

In the Sierra Maestra the main problem for Che during the first few months was the organization of a Rebel Army that would not fall apart at the first sound of battle. It was during the first battle that Che himself was wounded, almost fatally, and this incident served to unite the rebels into a cohesive fighting unit. During the following months, after many small battles

and the invasion of the plains in 1958, the Rebel Army culminated its success in the fall of the city of Santa Clara -- the decisive battle of which Che was chief strategist. This led to the flight of dictator Fulgencio Batista and the victory of the Revolution on January 1, 1959.

The revolution entered into a new and for Cuba, in any case, extremely crucial stage as the responsibility for governing passed over to the Castro Regime. Che was made Economic Minister during the early years of the Castro rule, but soon the unrest in the rest of Latin America called Che back to action.

Bolivia, like the rest of Latin America, has always been unstable politically and is now under the rule of a fascist military coalition. It was this government that Che fought against for close to three years with about forty to sixty active guerrillas. It was not until Regis Debray in early 1967, published *REVOLUTION IN THE REVOLUTION?* that anyone was sure Che was still alive and functioning. Most of the Indians with whom Che worked in his youth supported his work, but few of them could give him constant support. Even fewer could help with the vast influx of government troops which came immediately after the Debray book was published. During September and early October Che was harassed constantly by the troops which eventually backed him into a small valley. On October 8, 1967, there ensued a violent gunfight between the guerrillas and government troops when one of Che's men was wounded. Che went to his aid only to be shot in both legs himself. The next day, October 9, he was murdered in the presence of CIA personnel.

It was Fidel who said, in his speech announcing the tragic death of Che, "If, as a guerrilla, he had an Achilles' heel, it was this excessively aggressive quality, his absolute contempt of danger." And it was Che himself, in his last sentence of his last article, who wrote his own epitaph:

"Wherever death may surprise us, it will be welcome, provided that this, our battle cry, reach some receptive ear, that another hand be extended to take up our weapons and that other men come forward to intone our funeral dirge with the staccato of machine guns and new cries of battle and victory."

VIVA CHE



In Remembrance of Che "Is Che Really Dead and Today?"

by Ewart Skinner

Although there had been attempts to keep the name of Ernesto Che Guevara out of the mouths of the people and out of the minds of students, his name and his example still exist.

Without regarding facts, history and study of the situation, it is quite simple to throw the spirit of Che into the brambles; regard the man as a bandit, a murderer and an infidel Castroite. But it would be injustice to condemn without knowing and stupidity to infer without looking at circumstance. The man had a commitment.

A look at Bolivia: In the mountains and valleys of Bolivia, many atrocities occur. The peasantry are murdered, harassed, exploited. As one of my Latin American friends frequently says, "I'd rather be shot than to starve, but who wants either? I'm no Castroite but maybe we should look again at our revolution."

In certain countries in Latin America, the Indians and peasants have been "dynamited away" from passing airplanes, the men mercilessly executed, the women raped, enslaved, mutilated and murdered. Recently, it has been reported that in Brazil, some officials were on trial for doing away with the Indians. There are murders by the scores. In June of 1967 Bolivian miners who refused a 50% wage reduction decreed by Barrientos's government called for guerrilla support were murdered. Forty men slaughtered. This and other criminal governmental tactics account for the fact that about a third of the guerrillas are unemployed miners. Even when employed, these people's life span is

almost half that of the average U.S. citizen.

How can one not believe that something must be done? The systems of Latin American governments do not allow elasticity and room for new thought. Now, can we be proud to be a system of right when the CIA supports Barrientos's henchmen who murdered Che Guevara? (It was proven that Che did not die in battle, but was murdered; shot at close range through the heart, a few hours after the fighting.)

I do not say that we should take up ourselves and accept every aspect of the Guevara movement. What I do say is that if we are going to sit back and look at Latin America, let us do it completely and wholeheartedly and in comfort. If we are going to get involved as the CIA did, let us do it in a way in which the system can be proud. An exemplary way -- not insidious and murderous. It is a fact that our system has done a great deal in Latin America. But generally, it has not been all beautiful.

A fact that we must, however, realize is that in the near future, political systems will fuse into a universal politic, prior to that, as is the case now in many places environmental politics. The direction now of the Caribbean and Latin America. We are now witnessing the overflow of ideology and thought, the effects of these systems. The world is now getting over the paranoia of Marxism, the youth devouring, appraising and looking at the benefits (as well as the defect of modern ideas). The youth puts our system under inspection -- it finds the same deficits and surplus of good. The irony

here is that under the hood of insurrection and anarchy, youth today is a more retinal body than ever before, a more sensible youth. Beneath the melee of the activists and of activity there is a productive, vigorous and more well endowed youth.

Between the banners of protesters one will see the defiant head of Che Guevara. It is not a head of Christ by any means, but neither is it the head of Mephistopheles. It is not the head of a Barrientos (Bolivia) nor of a Johnson (Viet Nam). (It seems a great incongruity that the public tries to gag the youth to speak of the Che Guevara when a good segment of the population proudly exhibits such heads as Wallace for courage. I cannot help but condemn these people for I have always believed that violence as well as humanity, has neither geography or state!

And so the name of Che will not die: neither will it fill the annals of true glory. Somewhere, it is glorified and somewhere it is dishonored. But in recollection, we must be sensible. Sometimes it is with disgust that I look at this age. But beneath the surface there is a healthy powerful and beautiful image; a revolution -- a liberation. I have only part charge of the emancipation of myself, I too, am afraid to love and hate as I should. And so are other people afraid to love and hate as they should.

I do not see myself a better man than Dr. Ernesto Che Guevara. The man had a commitment, he gave his life for it. If we do not or cannot or will not accord him respect for his ideas, we must for his courage.

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