

Ernesto 'Che' Guevara The Bolivian Diary



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The Bolivian Diary

'Vivid and compelling' *Economist*

'Guevara was a figure of epic proportions. These diaries, stark and moving, will be his most enduring monument' *Observer*

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ernesto Che Guevara was born into a middle-class family in Argentina in 1928 and trained as a doctor, but became radicalised by the poverty and hunger he witnessed in South America. He played a key role in the Cuban revolution and served in Fidel Castro's government. He then travelled to Congo to support the rebellion there, and finally to Bolivia where with a small, committed group he initiated a revolutionary movement, and was captured and executed by Bolivian and US military forces in 1967.

ERNESTO CHE GUEVARA

The Bolivian Diary



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Editor's Note

This edition of Che Guevara's *The Bolivian Diary* has been prepared by the Che Guevara Studies Center, Havana. It is based on the first authorized edition published in Spanish in 1968 by the Cuban Book Institute. Certain pages that did not appear in that first edition have now been incorporated. Those diary entries, originally withheld by the Bolivian government for 'security' reasons, are dated: January 4, 5, 8, and 9; February 8 and 9; March 14; April 4 and 5; June 9 and 10; and July 4 and 5.

The text of the first edition has also been thoroughly checked and revised against facsimiles of the diary itself in order to clarify terms or words that were illegible. In the few remaining instances where this has not been possible, the text is marked 'illegible in the original'.

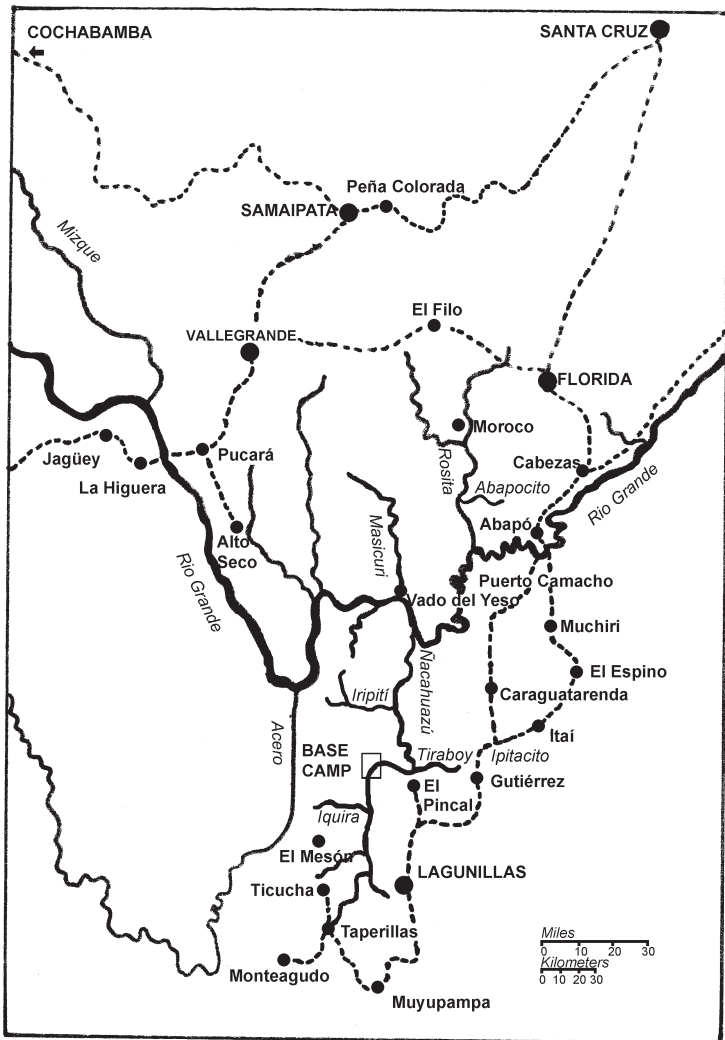
Che used a variety of noms de guerre or nicknames throughout the diary and sometimes the same person was referred to by several different names. For this reason, a glossary has been prepared to aid the reader.

Che's spelling of place names in the area of Bolivia in which the guerrilla force operated also varied, and this is reflected in the diary. Some of these names have been standardized to assist the reader, for example, in the case of the Ñacahuazú River. Generally, however, the integrity of the original diary has been maintained.

Several key documents related to the Bolivian revolutionary movement at the time have been included as appendices. Throughout the diary, however, Che makes references to other documents that have not been reproduced here.



Map of Bolivia
Showing the Zone of Guerrilla Operations



Zone of Guerrilla Operations

Preface

Camilo Guevara March

Santa Cruz, Bolivia

1967

Almost a year of intense warfare has transpired. Recently, due to a betrayal, Joaquín's group has fallen victim to an ambush in Vado del Yeso [Puerto Mauricio], and the encirclement of Che's troops tightens. They have decided to abandon the area in search of more suitable terrain, where they can more effectively develop the conditions to consolidate the guerrilla movement. It is the afternoon and soldiers are advancing; combat is imminent.

On the last page of the red diary, confiscated by the Bolivian military, is an entry dated October 7, 1967. It is barely possible to decipher the author's difficult handwriting: 'The 11-month anniversary of our establishment as a guerrilla force passed in a bucolic mood, with no complications . . .' These words in no way read as an epilogue to the heroic saga described in the diary, as there is not the slightest tone of discouragement, pessimism, or defeatism; on the contrary, these words appear to be a beginning, a prologue.

October 8 – A wounded prisoner is transferred to the tumble-down school at La Higuera, absorbed in his pain and almost unable to breathe. He can barely walk upright; he fights with the weight, accumulating over the past few months, which conspires against his shoulders. He has been weakened by calamity and illness, by the death of friends and compañeros, by the betrayal of some, by the unenviable responsibility he bears for the lives of those near and far away, by a yearning for his loved ones. The burden is equal to the

sum of terrestrial forces. Yet his body is still upright and armed with conviction, preparing for another battle.

Later, bound against the adobe wall, waiting for the inevitable verdict, he silently observes the head guards. Some are more arrogant than others, assassins in the premature song of victory, who occasionally try to harass the man they consider their victim. But the respect he inspires and the power of his stony gaze deeply affects and confuses them, blocking any inclination toward cowardice. Nevertheless, they are poised to avenge this guerrilla's audacity in facing, with only 50 armed men, an entire army trained and financed by the empire and its Praetorian rangers.

His captors are faced with a tremendous dilemma. On the one hand, they hold one of the most legendary revolutionaries ever known, who can be paraded as proof of foreign aggression or an international communist plot. On the other hand, they know their captive is tenacious, a righteous man commanding solid arguments, who could transform any court into a public platform, so that any trial might become a dangerous political game with an uncertain outcome.

The National Liberation Army of Bolivia (ELN) has dramatically announced its presence and carried out multiple actions, almost always successfully, with no effective response from the government. Neither national nor international public opinion is detached from these events: everywhere, a sympathetic atmosphere is developing, despite the fact that the expected mass incorporation of Bolivian peasants into the guerrilla ranks has yet not occurred. News reports emerging in recent days have provided the guerrilla fighters with enormous publicity. This is a very delicate moment and those interested in maintaining the status quo know it will be decisive.

A mood of vengeance abounds among the colorless, ignominious drones, who defend their 'causes' with such unsubtle methods. If it is paradoxical to make a jail out of a school, it is simply futile (as well as inept and criminal), to seek to kill ideas with a rifle.

He is concerned about the fate of those who made it out of the battle alive, he wonders . . . In the brief moments of silence, struggling against the rope to alleviate the numbness in his arms and legs,

he retreats into his memories, to the company of his wife, surrounded by their children, his relatives and closest friends, his Argentina, his Cuba, the world, and Fidel.

Undoubtedly, some will praise themselves or will be congratulated for having brought this 'glory' to the Bolivian Army. The capture of Commander Guevara has been pure oxygen for the lifeblood and prestige of the regime – at least this is what they think. Should they have asked themselves: How can a future spirit be imprisoned in the past? How can an example be incarcerated?

With his leg wounded, his rifle broken, and with no other weapon, they managed to capture this man, but only because he was a brother to his *compañeros*, a real man, a true revolutionary to the core, a human being moved only by great feelings of love.

He could have broken through the encirclement of soldiers surrounding him. Who could doubt his tactical genius? But he preferred to remain with those who could not defend themselves, the sick and wounded *compañeros*. He could have left Santa Cruz some time before, but he decided to wait, to continue the search and not abandon Joaquín's group. Precious time transpired, but he never dwelled on these lost days. He could have allowed Pelao and the Frenchman, who later demonized him, to attempt to reach the city through their own efforts, but he preferred to leave them where they were reasonably safe.

Such an intense, complete man does not fit within the narrow criteria of those who pass judgment on him. Certainly, there are those who fear him and criticize him – unwavering revolutionaries of after-dinner conversations, bureaucrats, ubiquitous cowards, opportunists, tyrants of the oligarchies and oligarchs of democracy. For different reasons they hide from him or try to hide him away behind the illusory mantel that utopias are unattainable. But others respect him – the majorities that in part or in full share his vision of the future. His grandeur is barely perceptible at the time of his capture, history will define it later.

Close by, during the evening hours, a small group of men have gathered in an area hemmed in by abrupt mountainous terrain. Some have fresh wounds, all are starving, thirsty, and exhausted

beyond words, uncertainty etched on their faces. They desperately seek news on the whereabouts of their *compañeros* and their beloved commander via a portable radio. Taunted by a powerful intuition of disaster, they nervously move the dial in search of the more reliable radio stations, although naturally they regard any broadcast with tremendous reservation. They know from experience that radio news can be subtly manipulated, capitalizing on the guerrilla fighter's perennial need for information by laying mortal traps or by leading them in mistaken directions. This time, however, they are willing to resign themselves to the most elementary indication, and will act without measuring the consequences.

They will do whatever is necessary, in accordance with their ideas and their feelings of solidarity toward their brothers-in-arms. The desire to help them and to save the movement is stronger than any rational hesitation about a rescue mission. What is at stake is the ELN itself, in this initial formative stage, for which the fighters have already so often wagered their lives.

The possible evacuation of the guerrilla forces had been planned, including where they would meet in the event of a setback or forced retreat: if not here, there, and if not, farther over. They have fully complied with the previously agreed on plans. There is no reason to feel shame, but after so many months of fighting in Bolivian territory, some feel vulnerable, with an unjustified yet understandable sense of guilt. For others, it has been an entire lifetime of sharing the ups and downs of the struggle, the few provisions, and the many hopes, dreams, and fears – of surviving others, of risking one's life, of losing beloved friends and relatives. They feel the anguish and regret of a latent despair, silently wishing for the same fate as their *compañeros*, whatever that might be, and although they force optimism to remain uppermost in their minds, their hearts experience the shocking acknowledgment of what they had until now considered impossible.

The dramatic news is confirmed: Che has died in combat. His belongings are described in vivid detail and other information is given that only those close to the scene could have known. The reality engulfs them, overpowering their thoughts and the fiber of their

bodies. What should they do? What is to be done? What are they doing there? Time presses upon them. The army has not abandoned its search for the guerrillas; in minutes or seconds, the soldiers might fall upon them. They have to act immediately. How many memories flood their minds, how many voices are still fresh in their ears? A phrase comes to mind, one of those that reduces great truths to a few words: 'In a revolution, if it's a true revolution, you win or you die.'

Perhaps there was another option, somewhere between an uncertain farewell and faith in the final goal, the 'Hasta la victoria siempre' [Ever onward to victory] we have heard so often. What does it matter: If the struggle continues, independently of the great loss, Che and his *compañeros* will have won. If the struggle is abandoned, irrespective of the present or the future, his battle cry, specifically directed to the poor and other receptive ears, will fall as lifeless as his body.

Their decision will affect the course of history. Although it is the people who always have the final word, it is a favorable, unequivocal sign when the rank and file of the revolutionary movement adheres to the thought and actions of their leaders. The remaining members of the ELN make a pact, now famous, to fight to the end, to continue the struggle until the guerrilla movement's main objectives become reality. They are confident that a movement strongly rooted in Latin Americanism and Che Guevara's historical thought, will lead to new epic moments in the peoples' struggles for their redemption.

October 9 – In that poor, little schoolhouse in La Higuera, a small space confines one of the most consequential human beings ever known. A great man patiently waits for death. The order to murder him comes from Washington; the underlings duly obey and with one bullet after another steal the vigor from the guerrilla fighter's body, a sad and terrible error.

Against their will, Che is transformed into a hardened symbol of resistance, a symbol of the fight for what is just, of passion, of the necessity of being fully human, multiplied infinitely in the ideals and weapons of those who struggle. This is what the front men and their omnipotent handlers fear.

They have never understood the absurdity of trying to destroy the essence of an audacious, creative spirit, an indefatigable and studious worker, a formidable leader who never ceased delivering blows against bureaucracy and aristocracy. They have never understood that it was, and always will be, impossible to undermine Che's conviction (which he himself embodied) that an individual human being can ascend to greater heights, can change for the better, and can make the society in which he or she lives a nobler place.

Che never ceased believing that revolutionaries, even if they are being massacred sadistically, should invoke the use of force only when absolutely necessary, and, even then, should never accompany it with cruelty. This idea is directly proportional to the condition of being a revolutionary.

Finally, without a trial, without a thought, the new man Che Guevara represented is killed. But what is born is a yearning for the new human being who is neither an illusion nor a fantasy. The dream now emerges of a new human being who is constantly renewed, who sacrifices themselves for others, who grows beyond mediocrity, if only for an instant, to become different, better. A dream, dormant for many centuries, takes shape: an ethical, virtuous, selfless human being. This time, stripped of all myth and mysticism, this person must be fundamentally human.

*Camilo Guevara March
Che Guevara Studies Center
July 2005*

A Necessary Introduction

Fidel Castro

It was Che's custom during his days as a guerrilla [during the 1956–58 Cuban revolutionary war] to carefully record his daily observations in a personal diary. During long marches over rugged and difficult terrain, in the midst of damp woods, when the lines of men, always hunched over from the weight of their packs, ammunition, and weapons, would stop for a moment to rest, or when the column would receive orders to halt and set up camp at the end of an exhausting day's march, you would see Che – as he was affectionately nicknamed by the Cubans from the beginning – take out a small notebook and, with the tiny and nearly illegible handwriting of a doctor, write his notes.

What he was able to save from these notes he later used in writing his magnificent historical narratives of the revolutionary war in Cuba – accounts full of revolutionary, educational, and human content.*

This time, thanks to his invariable habit of noting the main events of each day, we have at our disposal rigorously exact, priceless, and detailed information on the heroic final months of his life in Bolivia.

These notes, not really written for publication, served as a tool in the constant evaluation of events, situations, and people, and at the same time served as an outlet for the expression of his keenly observant and analytical spirit, often laced with a fine sense of humor. They are soberly written and form a coherent whole from beginning to end.

It should be kept in mind that they were written during those rare

* Ernesto Che Guevara, *Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War* (Melbourne & New York: Ocean Press, 2006).

moments of rest in the midst of a heroic and superhuman physical effort, where he bore exhausting obligations as leader of a guerrilla detachment in the difficult first stages of a struggle of this nature, which unfolded under incredibly harsh material conditions. This reveals once more his method of work, his will of steel.

The diary, in the course of analyzing in detail the incidents of each day, takes note of the shortcomings, critical assessments, and recriminations that are part of and inevitable in the development of a revolutionary guerrilla struggle.

Inside a guerrilla detachment such assessments must take place constantly. This is especially true in the stage in which it consists of a small nucleus facing extremely adverse material conditions and an enemy infinitely superior in number, when the slightest negligence or the most insignificant mistake can be fatal. The leader must be extremely demanding, using each event or episode, no matter how insignificant it may seem, to educate the combatants and future cadres of new guerrilla detachments.

The process of training a guerrilla force is a constant appeal to each person's consciousness and honor. Che knew how to touch the most sensitive fibers in revolutionaries. When Marcos, after being repeatedly admonished by Che, was warned that he could be dishonorably discharged from the guerrilla unit, he replied, 'I would rather be shot!' Later he gave his life heroically. Similar behavior could be noted among all those in whom Che placed confidence and those he had to admonish for one reason or another in the course of the struggle. He was a fraternal and humane leader, but he also knew how to be demanding and, at times, severe. But above all, and even more than with others, Che was severe with himself. He based discipline on the guerrilla's moral consciousness and on the tremendous force of his own example.

The diary also contains numerous references to [Régis] Debray; it reflects the enormous concern Che felt over the arrest and imprisonment of the revolutionary writer who had been given a mission to carry out in Europe – although at heart Che would have preferred him to have stayed with the guerrilla unit, which is why Che shows a certain uneasiness and, on occasion, some doubts about his behavior.

Che had no way of knowing the odyssey Debray experienced in the hands of the repressive forces, or the firm and courageous attitude he maintained in face of his captors and torturers. He noted, however, the enormous political significance of the trial and on October 3, six days before his death, in the midst of bitter and tense events, he wrote, 'We heard an interview with Debray, who was very courageous when confronted by a student acting as an agent provocateur.' This was his last reference to the writer.

The Cuban revolution and its relation to the guerrilla movement are repeatedly referred to in the diary. Some may interpret our decision to publish it as an act of provocation that will give the enemies of the revolution – the Yankee imperialists and their allies, the Latin American oligarchs – arguments for redoubling their efforts to blockade, isolate, and attack Cuba.

Those who judge the facts this way should remember that Yankee imperialism has never needed a pretext to carry out its crimes anywhere in the world, and that its efforts to crush the Cuban revolution began as soon as our country passed its first revolutionary law. This stems from the obvious and well-known fact that imperialism is the policeman of world reaction, the systematic supporter of counter-revolution, and the protector of the most backward and inhuman social structures that still exist in the world.

Solidarity with a revolutionary movement may be taken as a pretext for Yankee aggression, but it will never be the real cause. To deny solidarity in order to avoid giving a pretext is a ridiculous, ostrich-like policy that has nothing to do with the internationalist character of today's social revolutions. To abandon solidarity with a revolutionary movement not only does not avoid providing a pretext, but in effect serves to support Yankee imperialism and its policy of dominating and enslaving the world.

Cuba is a small country, economically underdeveloped as are all countries dominated and exploited for centuries by colonialism and imperialism. It is located only 90 miles from the coast of the United States, has a Yankee naval base on its territory [Guantánamo], and faces numerous obstacles in attaining socioeconomic development. Grave dangers have threatened our country since the triumph of the

revolution; but imperialism will never make us yield for these reasons, because the difficulties that flow from a consistently revolutionary line of action are of no importance to us.

From the revolutionary point of view, there is no alternative but to publish Che's Bolivian diary. It fell into the hands of [President René] Barrientos, who immediately sent copies to the CIA, the Pentagon, and the US government. Journalists with links to the CIA had access to the document inside Bolivia; having made photocopies of it, they promised to refrain, for the moment, from publishing it.

The Barrientos government and the top-ranking military officers have more than enough reasons not to publish the diary. It reveals the immense incapacity of their army and the countless defeats they were dealt by a handful of determined guerrillas who, in a matter of weeks, took nearly 200 weapons from them in combat. Furthermore, Che describes Barrientos and his regime in terms they deserve, with words that cannot be erased from history.

Imperialism also had its own reasons: Che and the extraordinary example he set are gaining increasing force in the world. His ideas, image, and name are banners of struggle against the injustices suffered by the oppressed and exploited; they evoke impassioned interest among students and intellectuals throughout the world.

In the United States itself, the Black [rights] movement and progressive students, both of which are continuing to grow in numbers, have made Che's figure their own. In the most combative demonstrations for civil rights and against the aggression in Vietnam, his image is brandished as a symbol of struggle. Few times in history, perhaps never before, has a figure, a name, an example become a universal symbol so quickly and with such impassioned force. This is because Che embodies, in its purest and most selfless form, the internationalist spirit that marks the world of today and that will characterize even more the world of tomorrow.

Arising from a continent yesterday oppressed by colonial powers, today exploited and held in backwardness and the most iniquitous underdevelopment by Yankee imperialism, there has emerged this singular figure who has become the universal symbol of revolutionary

struggle, even in the metropolitan centers of the imperialists and colonialists.

The Yankee imperialists fear the power of this example and everything that may help to spread it. The diary is the living expression of an extraordinary personality; a lesson in guerrilla warfare written in the heat and tension of daily events, as flammable as gunpowder; a demonstration in life that the people of Latin America are not powerless in face of the enslavers of entire peoples and of their mercenary armies. That is its intrinsic value, and that is what has kept them from publishing it up to now.

Also among those who may be interested in keeping the diary unpublished are the pseudorevolutionaries, opportunists, and charlatans of every stripe. These people call themselves Marxists, communists, and other such titles. They have not, however, hesitated to call Che a mistaken adventurer or, when they speak more benignly, an idealist whose death marked the swan song of revolutionary armed struggle in Latin America. 'If Che himself,' they say, 'the greatest exponent of these ideas and an experienced guerrilla fighter, died in the guerrilla struggle and his movement failed to free Bolivia, it only shows how mistaken he was!' How many of these miserable creatures were happy with the death of Che and have not even blushed at the thought that their stance and arguments completely coincide with those of imperialism and the most reactionary oligarchs!

That is how they justify themselves. That is how they justify their treacherous leaders who, at a given moment, did not hesitate to play at armed struggle with the underlying intention – as would be seen later – of destroying the guerrilla detachments, putting the brakes on revolutionary action, and imposing their own shameful and ridiculous political schemes, because they were absolutely incapable of carrying out any other line. That is how they justify those who do not want to fight, who will never fight for the people and their liberation. That is how they justify those who have made a caricature of revolutionary ideas, turning them into an opium-like dogma with neither content nor message for the masses; those who have converted the organizations of popular struggle into instruments of

conciliation with domestic and foreign exploiters; and those who advocate policies that have nothing to do with the genuine interests of the exploited peoples of this continent.

Che thought of his death as something natural and probable in the process; he made an effort to stress, especially in his last writings, that this eventuality would not hold back the inevitable march of the Latin American revolution. In his 'Message to the Tricontinental', he reiterated this thought, 'Our every action is a battle cry against imperialism . . . Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome if our battle cry has reached even one receptive ear, if another hand reaches out to take up our arms . . .'*

Che considered himself a soldier in the revolution, with absolutely no concern as to whether he would survive it. Those who see the outcome of his struggle in Bolivia as marking the failure of his ideas can, with the same oversimplification, deny the validity of the ideas and struggles of all the great revolutionary precursors and thinkers; this includes the founders of Marxism, who were themselves unable to complete the task and to see in life the fruits of their noble efforts.

In Cuba, [José] Martí and [Antonio] Maceo were killed in combat; Yankee intervention followed, ending the War of Independence and frustrating the immediate objectives of their struggle. Brilliant advocates of socialist revolution, like Julio Antonio Mella, have been killed, murdered by agents in the service of imperialism. But these deaths could not, in the long run, block the triumph of a process that began 100 years ago. And absolutely nothing can call into question the profound justice of the cause and line of struggle of those eminent fighters, or the timeliness of their basic ideas, which have always inspired Cuban revolutionaries.

In Che's diary, from the notes he wrote, you can see how real the possibilities of success were, how extraordinary the catalyzing power of the guerrilla struggle. On one occasion, in the face of evident signs of the Bolivian regime's weakness and rapid deterioration, he wrote,

* Ernesto Che Guevara, *Che Guevara Reader* (Melbourne & New York: Ocean Press, 2003).

‘The government is disintegrating rapidly. What a pity we don’t have 100 more men right now.’

Che knew from his experience in Cuba how often our small guerrilla detachment had been on the verge of being wiped out. Whether such things happen depends almost entirely on chance and the imponderables of war. But would such an eventuality have given anyone the right to consider our line erroneous, and, in addition, to take it as an example to discourage revolution and inculcate a sense of powerlessness among the peoples? Many times in history revolutionary processes have been preceded by adverse episodes. We ourselves in Cuba, didn’t we have the experience of Moncada just six years before the definitive triumph of the people’s armed struggle?

From July 26, 1953 – the attack on the Moncada garrison in Santiago de Cuba – to December 2, 1956 – the landing of the *Granma* – revolutionary struggle in Cuba in the face of a modern, well-equipped army seemed to many people to lack any prospect for success; the action of a handful of fighters was seen as a chimera of idealists and dreamers who were ‘deeply mistaken’. The crushing defeat and total dispersal of the inexperienced guerrilla detachment by Batista’s troops on December 5, 1956, seemed to confirm entirely those pessimistic forebodings. But only 25 months later the remnants of that guerrilla unit had developed the strength and experience necessary to annihilate that same army.

In all epochs and under all circumstances, there will always be an abundance of pretexts for not fighting; but not fighting is the only way to never attain freedom. Che did not live as long as his ideas; he fertilized them with his blood. It is certain, on the other hand, that his pseudorevolutionary critics, with all their political cowardice and eternal lack of action, will outlive by far the evidence of their own stupidity.

Worth noting in the diary are the actions of one of those revolutionary specimens that are becoming typical in Latin America these days: Mario Monje, brandishing the title of secretary of the Communist Party of Bolivia, sought to dispute with Che the political and military leadership of the movement. Monje claimed, moreover, that he had intended to resign his party post to take on this

responsibility; in his opinion, obviously, it was enough to have once held that title to claim such a prerogative.

Mario Monje, naturally, had no experience in guerrilla warfare and had never been in combat. In addition, the fact that he considered himself a communist should at least have obliged him to dispense with the gross and mundane chauvinism that had already been overcome by those who fought for Bolivia's first independence.

With such a conception of what an anti-imperialist struggle on this continent should be, 'communist leaders' of this type do not even surpass the level of internationalism of the aboriginal tribes subjugated by the European colonizers in the epoch of the conquest.

Bolivia and its historical capital, Sucre, were named after the country's first liberators [Simón Bolívar and Antonio José de Sucre], both of whom were Venezuelan. And in this country, in a struggle for the definitive liberation of his people, the leader of the Communist Party of Bolivia had the possibility of enlisting the cooperation of the political, organizational, and military talent of a genuine revolutionary titan, a person whose cause was not limited by the narrow and artificial – not to mention unjust – borders of Bolivia. Yet he did nothing but engage in disgraceful, ridiculous, and unjustified claims to leadership.

Bolivia has no outlet to the sea, and therefore, for its own liberation and to avoid exposure to a cruel blockade, it more than any other country needs revolutionary victories by its neighbors. Che, because of his enormous authority, ability, and experience, was the person who could have accelerated this process.

In the period before a split occurred in the Bolivian Communist Party, Che had established relations with leaders and members, soliciting their help for the revolutionary movement in South America. Under authorization from the party, some members worked with Che for years on various assignments. When the split occurred, it created a special situation, given that a number of the people who had been working with him ended up in one or another group. But Che did not see the struggle in Bolivia as an isolated occurrence, rather as part of a revolutionary liberation movement that would soon extend to other countries in South America. He sought to

organize a movement free of sectarianism, one that could be joined by anyone who wanted to fight for the liberation of Bolivia and of all the other peoples of Latin America subjugated by imperialism.

In the initial phase of preparing a base for the guerrilla unit, however, Che depended for the most part on the help of a group of courageous and discreet collaborators who, at the time of the split, remained in the party headed by Monje. Although he certainly felt no sympathy toward Monje, in deference to them he invited Monje to visit his camp first. He then invited Moisés Guevara, a leader of the mine workers and a political leader. Moisés Guevara had left the party to join in the formation of another organization, the one led by Oscar Zamora. He later left that group because of differences with Zamora, who proved to be another Monje. Zamora had once promised Che he would help in organizing the armed guerrilla struggle in Bolivia, but later backed away from that commitment and cowardly folded his arms when the hour of action arrived. After Che's death, Zamora became one of his most venomous 'Marxist-Leninist' critics. Moisés Guevara joined Che without hesitation, as he had sought to do long before Che arrived in Bolivia; he offered his support and gave his life heroically for the revolutionary cause.

The group of Bolivian guerrillas who until then had stayed with Monje's organization also joined Che. Led by Inti and Coco Peredo, who proved to be courageous, outstanding fighters, they left Monje and decisively backed Che. But Monje, seeking revenge, began to sabotage the movement. In La Paz he intercepted well-trained communist militants who were on their way to join the guerrillas. These facts demonstrate that within the ranks of revolutionaries, men who meet all the conditions necessary for struggle can be criminally frustrated in their development by incapable, maneuvering, and charlatan-like leaders.

Che was a man never personally interested in posts, leadership, or honors; but he believed revolutionary guerrilla warfare was the fundamental form of action for the liberation of the peoples of Latin America, given the economic, political, and social situation in nearly all Latin American countries. Moreover, he was firmly convinced that the military and political leadership of the guerrilla struggle

had to be unified. He also believed the struggle could be led only by the guerrilla unit itself, and not from the comfortable offices of bureaucrats in the cities. So he was not prepared to give up leadership of a guerrilla nucleus that, at a later stage of its development, was intended to develop into a struggle of broad dimensions in Latin America. And he certainly was not prepared to turn over such leadership to an inexperienced emptyhead with narrow chauvinist views. Such chauvinism often infects even revolutionary elements of various countries in Latin America. Che believed that it must be combatted because it represents reactionary, ridiculous, and sterile thinking.

‘And let us develop genuine proletarian internationalism,’ he said in his ‘Message to the Tricontinental’. ‘Let the flag under which we fight be the sacred cause of the liberation of humanity, so that to die under the colors of Vietnam, Venezuela, Guatemala, Laos, Guinea, Colombia, Bolivia . . . to mention only the current scenes of armed struggle . . . will be equally glorious and desirable for a Latin American, an Asian, an African, and even a European.

‘Every drop of blood spilled in a land under whose flag one was not born is experience gathered by the survivor to be applied later in the struggle for liberation of one’s own country. And every people that liberates itself is a step in the battle for the liberation of one’s own people.’

In the same way, Che believed fighters from various Latin American countries would participate in the guerrilla detachment, that the guerrilla struggle in Bolivia would be a school in which revolutionaries would serve their apprenticeship in combat. To help him with this task he wanted to have, together with the Bolivians, a small nucleus of experienced guerrilla fighters, nearly all of whom had been his comrades in the Sierra Maestra during the revolutionary struggle in Cuba. These were men whose abilities, courage, and spirit of self-sacrifice Che knew. None of them hesitated to respond to his call, none of them abandoned him, none of them surrendered.

In the Bolivian campaign Che acted with his proverbial tenacity, skill, stoicism, and exemplary attitude. It might be said that he was consumed by the importance of the mission he had assigned himself,