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The life of Che Guevara was that of a nomadic revolutionary who sought to implement his conception of social justice by personal activism. While his defeat and death in Bolivia have mitigated the immediate threat of "wars of liberation" in Latin America, the potential for violent social upheaval remains high in that section of the world. Should such upheavals occur, the legacy of Che Guevara will certainly prove to be an important factor.

## CHE GUEVARA: AN EPILOG

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A research paper prepared by  
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### INTRODUCTION

Professor Kalman H. Silvert, noted scholar and writer of Latin American affairs, has made the following observation: "From the Mexican Revolution to the present, every Latin nationalist movement has caused policy vacillation in the United States, even though stable and fruitful accommodations are eventually made."<sup>1</sup> The truth and profundity of this statement are nowhere more evident than in the episodes in the drama of the United States versus Cuba. In 1957 the United States fully supported the Batista regime; in 1958 U.S. support shifted away from Batista, through a stage of "benevolent nonin-

tervention," to a position of considerable support of Fidel Castro's revolutionary efforts; in 1959 the support of Castro, which had become complete and unequivocal in the final days of the 26th of July Movement, shifted to a position of growing distrust to final severance of diplomatic relations with Castro's Cuba in 1961. The Bay of Pigs fiasco and the missile crisis have contributed to the maintenance of poor relations since 1961.

It is entirely possible that Edward Boorstein is correct when he asserts that the root cause of the Cuban Revolution was "American Imperialism."<sup>2</sup> It is also possible that Fidel Castro intended all along that Cuba should become a total

dictatorship to be led by a confirmed Marxist. It is possible that nothing the U.S. diplomats could have done would have prevented the present status of United States-Cuban relations. Perhaps Cuba does pose a real threat, lying just 90 miles off the southern coast of the United States, plotting the destruction of U.S. capitalism. Or, perhaps, these and a multitude of other generalizations about Cuba are only half revealing as to the truths involved.

The purpose of this paper is to explore United States and Cuban relations since 1956, not in the chronology of pure history, but in the chronology of human undercurrents, personal involvements, and the impact that individuals may impart to those larger issues which, together, create international relations. One author suggested that "attempting to generalize about the motivations of Latin Americans amounts almost to effrontery."<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, close investigation of the actions and reactions of one state, and those individuals who have created that state, may yield valuable insight into motives and ideals of other nations who seek greater degrees of self-determination or of individuals within those states who seek greater degrees of personal control. Revolutions of rising expectations are no longer uncommon; it is imperative that policies of stable nations be re-framed to accommodate such revolutions.

A leading actor in the evolution which produced Castro Cuba was Che Guevara. Perhaps Che was not ordinary; perhaps he was even extraordinary. He was, at any rate, representative in the sense that he represented the revolutionary spirit which has pervaded much, if not all, of the world in the decade of the 1960's. Che has been chosen as the center of this study because he is representative and because his contributions, whatever they may have been, have ceased and are, therefore, more easily studied in their entirety.

This paper, then, is concerned with and structured about a single man, a single actor throughout the turbulent American period from 1956 to the present. More important than what this single man was or what he did or might have done or what he preached is the legacy he may have left to the Americas.

### I—CHE THE REVOLUTIONARY CUBAN

"... a leftist ring-leader among his classmates."<sup>1</sup>

In a letter to his family in mid-1956, Ernesto Che Guevara wrote: "I believe in armed struggle as the only solution for people who are fighting for freedom, and I act according to this belief."<sup>2</sup> At age 37, 2 years before his last "armed struggle," Che Guevara had written this final commentary on his own Marxist philosophy and had capsulized his most infamous trait: he had been a nomadic, armed revolutionary for most of his life. From his native Argentina, to Guatemala, to Mexico, to Cuba, to Africa, and back to his native hemisphere, he had roamed in search of oppressed people to whose cause he could devote his mountain of energy. While Che Guevara was totally committed to forcefully imposing his ideological convictions on other peoples, he also showed deep and apparently sincere concern for the individual human being. Although it may seem contradictory to assign to a single individual both "humanistic" and "Marxist-Leninist" tendencies, it is this blend of contradictory elements which made Che Guevara the phenomenon that he was and contributed directly to making him, posthumously, the martyr of the "new left" and of a large segment of current Cuba.

It was no accident that Che Guevara ultimately espoused considerable concern for the welfare of his fellowman. He spent his very early years in a family environment which allowed unlimited

freedom of thought and action and in which the major concern was with an exploration of the true value of man and of man's endeavors. "There were three thousand books in the Guevara home, and Che was interested in everything from sociology and philosophy to mathematics and engineering—but not books on church or military affairs."<sup>3</sup>

Very early in his life Guevara became involved in the social problems around him. At age 11 he was "active" in support of striking light and power workers; when the company hired strikebreakers, Che proceeded to smash every single light in town.<sup>4</sup> At the age of 13 he toured northern Argentina; at the age of 24 he toured other Latin American countries. Everywhere he noted with despair the social injustices and the economic imbalances among the classes of Latin American society.

In his late teens Che had met many Argentine Marxists, acquaintances of his mother. Despite this early influence, it seems clear the Guevara's early sociological concern was motivated by a nationalism combined with an ultrasensitivity to the suffering of his fellowman—his true Marxist convictions were to be solidified later. Juan Bosch, former President of the Dominican Republic, who met Guevara in Costa Rica in the early 1950's, in speaking of Che's concern with the socioeconomic situation in Latin America, has written that Che was

...intensely preoccupied with what he saw. He seemed dissatisfied with all solutions proposed up to that time, and when he was asked specific questions, he criticized all parties, but never defined his own position. However, I am convinced by the way he answered questions that he was not a Communist then.<sup>5</sup>

While Guevara did not articulate his concern in political terms in those early days, he was able to show clearly his

concern in other, more physical ways. On Christmas Eve of 1953, at the age of 25, Che Guevara arrived in Guatemala City, prepared to devote himself to the leftwing cause of Jacobo Arbenz. It was here, in the pursuit of a separate engagement, that Guevara met members of Castro's 26th of July Movement, a meeting that was to guide him ultimately to his death.

Disappointed with the Guatemalan outcome and convinced that the defeat of Arbenz was the "result of the cold, premeditated aggression of the United States, hiding behind the smokescreen of its continental propaganda,"<sup>6</sup> Guevara went to Mexico in August of 1954 where he renewed his acquaintance with the Cuban 26th of July Movement. In 1955, in Mexico, Che Guevara met Fidel Castro for the first time.

At the time Guevara met Castro, Fidel had already led a revolutionary attack against a corrupt government and had participated in other attempts at solving socioeconomic problems by armed action. With Che Guevara's own bent for armed struggle, his concern for social welfare of Latin Americans, and his disappointment at having failed in the one serious attempt he had made at revolutionary activity, it was natural that Guevara would immediately hold Fidel Castro in great esteem and would be willing to "sign on" with the Castro forces.

The man to whom Guevara had pledged his efforts, Fidel Castro, was born in Oriente, Cuba, and had been raised and educated under the tutelage of Jesuit scholars. Born into a family of considerable wealth, Fidel and his younger brother Raul enjoyed educational advantages far above the average Cuban in the 1940's. Both Fidel and Raul, like Guevara, indicated an early concern for social injustice and a willingness to take aggressive action to correct that injustice. At the Colegio Dolores, where they had been sent to

complete their secondary education, both Raul and Fidel were expelled "for having organized a strike in the dining hall, claiming the Jesuits were exercising social discrimination in distributing the food."<sup>7</sup>

In 1942 Fidel attended the Jesuit College of Belen and in the fall of 1945 entered the Law School at the University of Havana. Like most Latin American universities in the 1940's, Havana University was a hotbed of dissent, and Castro "entered into the activities of these circles with all his characteristic impetuosity."<sup>8</sup> In 1947 Fidel joined a group which was planning to invade the Dominican Republic to overthrow General Trujillo; the Cuban Government intercepted the boats, and Fidel, an excellent swimmer, was forced to swim to shore with his tommygun slung about his neck.<sup>9</sup> Despite the failure, this early effort portended Fidel Castro's future.

Although ultraliberal in his views and actions, there is no indication that Fidel Castro embraced the Communist ideology in his university days. One reported incident is indicative of what his future attitude would be toward the Communists. When Fidel ran for vice president of the Law Students' Association, he engaged the support of the local Communists; following his victory, he delivered violent attacks on the Communists and their activities, to the extent that he was placed in considerable personal danger.<sup>10</sup>

After receiving his law degree in 1950 and achieving some publicity, if not material rewards, for his legal efforts, Fidel Castro joined the Ortodoxo Party, which stood in opposition to both the then President Socarras' party and the Batista group, which was then out of power. For the election of 1 June 1952, Fidel Castro was entered as a congressional candidate of the Havana district. On 10 March 1952 the Batista coup occurred, and Fidel Castro's potential electoral career was ended before it began.

Castro tried twice to bring complaints against the Batista coup, stating that Batista had violated the Constitution of 1940. Having failed by legal means, Fidel Castro organized and led the attack against the Moneado Barracks on 26 July 1953 in an effort to initiate a popular uprising against Batista. The attack was an astounding failure, despite meticulous detailed planning. Following a trial on 21 September 1953, Fidel Castro was imprisoned on the Isle of Pines where he remained until his release, by amnesty, on 15 May 1955. On 18 May 1955, Castro went to Mexico where he rejoined his brother Raul and others of the Moncada Barracks group. The group was then operating under the title of "26th of July Movement," in commemoration of the attack of that date.<sup>11</sup>

The forces which Fidel Castro had gathered about him in Mexico, including Dr. Guevara, boarded their single vessel, the *Granma*, and sailed for Cuba on 25 November 1956 at 2 a.m. They were ill prepared for their ambitious expedition. The small ship was overcrowded with men and supplies; all the men became seasick; supplies were jettisoned at one point when it appeared the ship was about to sink; the landing was finally made in daylight, instead of darkness as planned; and the landing was discovered immediately. Batista's forces decimated the 82 guerrillas, leaving only about a dozen to continue the effort. Forty-five days after the landing, on 17 January 1957, 17 survivors, with 22 rifles, stormed the Army post of LaPlata, and after about 1 hour of engagement the small post surrendered. The Cuban Revolution had begun.

The enigma underlying the success which Fidel Castro enjoyed in his revolutionary warfare against the Cuban Government from 1956 to 1 January 1959 has been investigated and analyzed by a multitude of scholars, and the analysis will no doubt continue. The relevant conditions to produce

"Fidelism" are, nevertheless, not all clear, but the essential ingredients appear to have been the frustrations and anxieties which had evolved in the experience of the Cuban people since 1898, coupled with a degenerate and ineffective government. It is outside the scope of this paper to provide, in depth, an analysis of the Cuban society which bred Fidel Castro and others like him. However, to understand how a motley group of adventurers could topple a man with the power of Fulgencio Batista, the environment in which this confrontation occurred must be summarized.

"When the nation waged war against Spain in 1898, it did so in the conviction that the replacement of Spanish by American political and economic theories would lay the foundation for a democratic and prosperous Cuba."<sup>12</sup> The next three decades of Cuban Government, however, suffered under the restrictions of the Platt Amendment which, in effect, simply transferred responsibility for Cuban colonization from Spain to the United States and did little to encourage or promote Cuban independence. The paternalism which marked the Cuban-United States relations until 1934, when the Platt Amendment was repealed, laid the foundation for the revolutionist activities of the 1950's. The futile attempt to transfer American values to a non-American culture, a culture which had been essentially feudalistic for centuries, "had a deleterious effect on the Cuban mind. It engendered frustration and rage, especially among the young, over the island's inability to travel alone on the road to nationhood."<sup>13</sup> The frustration culminated in the political turbulence of 1933 which, in turn, culminated in the "sergeant's coup" led by Sergeant Fulgencio Batista. Batista's 10-year reign was noteworthy only for its corruption and unfulfilled reformist promises; Grau San Martin and Carlos Socarras, Batista's successors, proved

little better than Batista.

American influence in the economic sphere was even greater than in the political sphere. U.S. domination of the Cuban economy began immediately following the Spaniards' departure and continued until 1960 when Castro and Che Guevara untied the norteamericano strings which had bound Cuba for six decades. By 1925 American "capital investment in Cuban sugar and other properties had increased from approximately \$50 million in 1898 to \$1.25 billion."<sup>14</sup> By 1940 American interests "still controlled more than fifty percent of the sugar production of Cuba" while the total American investment by 1940 was about \$1,400 million.<sup>15</sup>

On the other hand, the economic domination by American interests began to decline rapidly in the 1940's and 1950's. U.S.-owned sugar production fell from its high of 70-80 percent in the 1930's to about 35 percent in 1958.<sup>16</sup> Ownership of the national banking system in Cuba also shifted in favor of Cuban interests: in 1950, 45 percent were Cuban owned, and by 1955 over 60 percent were Cuban.<sup>17</sup> The trend toward greater Cuban participation in Cuban economic affairs was clear, and the disengagement of American influence was a hopeful sign for Cuban freedom, at least economically.

It cannot be concluded from this, however, that Castro and Company were totally in error to base their revolution, in part at least, on economic bases. Gross figures, such as those given above, may reflect economic growth of a nation, but hardly reflect the well-being of the individual citizen. Cuba in 1958, as it always had been, was dependent on the whims, natural or human, of a "single crop, sugar, which accounted for more than 80 percent of Cuban exports and employed about a half million workers for only three to four months a year."<sup>18</sup> The critical economic factor in Cuba in 1958, as in

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most of Latin America, was distribution of wealth: "Only a fraction of the population enjoyed a monthly per capita income of 540 pesos, while the majority of rural families survived on seven pesos."<sup>19</sup>

Nonetheless, by Latin American standards, Cuba in 1958 was well off: it had the second highest per capita income; it had one of the three highly developed railway networks; it was fourth in industrial production; over two-thirds of the population could read and write;<sup>20</sup> by many other Latin American indices of well-being, the average Cuban was prosperous.

Ironically, Cuba probably experienced the Castro revolution because of economic advancements, not dire poverty. Ruiz, in his complete analysis of the causes and impetus for the revolution, suggests that "social upheavals occur not where people have to grovel daily for a livelihood but, on the contrary, where economic development permits thinking and planning for the future."<sup>21</sup> Professor Robert F. Smith of the University of Connecticut, addressing the domestic causes of revolution, has noted: "Even those at the bottom of the economic ladder generally had enough contact with society at large to see that poverty was neither inevitable nor immutable. Cubans could see about them a paradox of 'progress and poverty.'"<sup>22</sup> The middle-class segment of Cuba, including Fidel Castro, wanted a larger slice of the economic and political growth of their Cuba. When peaceful efforts proved fruitless, the alternative was violence.

Fidel Castro's earliest statement on the purpose of his revolutionary action was his speech in his own defense delivered at his trial following the unsuccessful attack on Moncado Barracks. Yet this speech, although it formed the propagandistic basis for the eventual revolution itself, was a "potpourri of middle-class panaceas, quasi-Marxist remedies, and paternalistic

attitudes. . . ."<sup>23</sup> These "panaceas," "remedies," and "attitudes" had all been heard before from Grau San Martin, Batista, et al. Castro's speech was not directed toward formation of a revolutionary government, but toward defending his own "right of rebellion against tyranny."<sup>24</sup> This 5-hour harangue was not a plan for a new Cuba, but a long-winded diatribe against a dictator who had outsmarted other politicians at the game of "coupmanship" in 1952. As late as 1958 Castro reiterated much of his 1953 speech and clearly stated the purpose of the revolution: "First of all and most of all, we are fighting to do away with dictatorship in Cuba and to establish the foundations of genuine representative government."<sup>25</sup>

Yet the foundations for the operation of a government were a long time in coming from Castro. Che Guevara, in recollecting the days before success, noted that "the principal actors of this Revolution had no coherent theoretical criteria."<sup>26</sup> Guevara also commented that the leaders of the revolution were "only a group of fighters with high ideals and little preparation."<sup>27</sup> As for himself, Guevara acknowledged that when he aligned himself with the *Granma* forces he was "tied by a bond of romantic sympathy for adventure and the thought that it would be worthwhile to meet death on a foreign beach for so pure an ideal."<sup>28</sup>

Finally, in 1958, Fidel Castro issued a manifesto which contained some concept of what his movement proposed for a governmental system, should the movement prove successful. As noted above, however, this plan was contained in the same declaration which restated the purpose of the revolution as simply an effort to overthrow Batista. The plan read, in part:

To replace the unconstitutional Batista regime, we will aid in setting up a provisional

government to be nominated by a special convention made up of the delegates of our various civic organizations: Lions, Rotarians, professional bodies such as the physicians' or engineers' guilds, religious associations, and so forth. This will be a break with established procedure, but we feel certain that it will prove workable. Once appointed, the provisional government's chief task will be to prepare and conduct truly honest elections within twelve months.<sup>29</sup>

Notwithstanding the fact that none of these provisions were ever implemented, the entire program was vague and uncertain, and considering the entire context of the plan, the program appeared to be an attempt to instantaneously create a new governmental system to please the reporter who was at hand. Professor Burks of Indiana University has called the period of 1953 to 1959 one in which "Castro's own program was an ill-defined utopian mishmash of contradictory political and economic principles."<sup>30</sup>

More significant than the absence of an ideology or a system of governmental machinery, however, was the absence of a clearly defined plan for the conduct of the war itself. Guevara noted that, just prior to the landing of the *Granma*, the concept of the revolutionary task ahead was a "blind faith in a rapid popular explosion, enthusiasm and faith in the power to liquidate the Batista regime by a swift, armed uprising combined with spontaneous revolutionary strikes, and the subsequent fall of the dictator."<sup>31</sup> While it is true that the *Granma* forces had been given considerable guerrilla training in Mexico under General Alberto Bayo, as late as 12 March 1958 Castro affirmed that the "strategy of the decisive blow is based on the revolutionary general strike, assisted by armed action."<sup>32</sup> The months of training in

guerrilla warfare were to be exploited only in support of the strikes in the cities and nothing more. As Theodore Draper suggests: "Castro, in effect, backed into guerrilla warfare after all his other plans had failed."<sup>33</sup> Neither Fidel Castro nor Che Guevara, it is obvious, ever intended to conduct an extended guerrilla war. Whatever may have been Castro's or Guevara's intentions before the landing of the *Granma*, the subsequent commitment to guerrilla warfare ultimately involved a "protracted military campaign of more than two years, sweeping economic changes, and radical modifications in the status and power of Cuban social groups."<sup>34</sup>

With an ill-defined plan of tactical operations, with only the vaguest of concepts for governing the Cuban nation, with an inauspicious beginning in 1956, Fidel Castro, Che Guevara, and Company nonetheless defeated a powerful dictator who had control of an army of some 40,000 men.

The specific reasons for the success of the 26th of July Movement are varied, complex, and interrelated. A major factor must surely be the eventual cooperation between the middle-class populace of the cities and Castro's rural-based forces; until late in the war Fidel Castro and his bearded compatriots were more a symbol of the revolution than effective guerrillas. As Draper suggested: "It was the desertion of the middle class—on which Batista's power was based—that caused his regime to disintegrate from within and his army to evaporate."<sup>35</sup> From this statement it must also be concluded that Batista, himself, was a major factor contributing to Castro's success. Had he not resorted to nearly uncontrolled terror tactics, had he instituted needed reform measures, or, in short, had he been an effective and honest leader, the Batista forces would most probably have had little difficulty controlling the Castro upstarts. Finally, Fidel Castro, himself, must be counted as a major force in the



Castro victory. The history of Cuba gives ample evidence of the Cuban reliance on a national chieftain. "In Fidel Castro, the Cubans found their latest leader, a bold, politically acute, and charismatic young *caudillo* who claimed that he spoke for the ideals of the immortal Martí."<sup>3 6</sup>

If Fidel Castro gave the 26th of July Movement its charismatic leadership, Che Guevara gave it the intellectual articulation it would soon need. Castro was to write, following Guevara's death in 1967, that Che's true value to the revolution was in the "field of ideas, in the field of sentiment, in the field of revolutionary virtues, in the field of intelligence. . . ."<sup>3 7</sup> The influence of these "ideals," "sentiments," "virtues," and "intelligence" would soon manifest itself in a revealing manner. Che Guevara, in his next role as a Cuban politician, would begin to reshape the destiny of a country to whose revolution he had attached himself because of simple "romantic sympathy for adventure."

## II—CHE THE POLITICIAN

"... at this moment we are the hope of unredeemed America."<sup>1</sup>

In February 1958 Fidel Castro lamented the Cuban unemployment problem in these words: "A million unemployed in a nation of six million bespeaks a terrible economic sickness which must be cured without delay, lest it fester and become a breeding ground for Communism."<sup>2</sup> This statement rings with tragic irony when compared to the statement a year later of another Cuban spokesman, Che Guevara. On 9 January 1959, the same day that he was becoming a legalized citizen of his new country, Guevara observed that "many of the Communist Party lost their lives fighting Batista while the Batista government was receiving weapons from the U.S. Government, and . . . the

Communists have earned the right to be just another party in Cuba."<sup>3</sup> Contrary to Guevara's gratuitous praise, however, the truth is that "when Castro first went to the hills, the Cuban Communist Party dismissed him as 'bourgeois' and 'putschist.' Only when they saw that he had a chance of winning did they try to take over his movement."<sup>4</sup> Another important truth is that the United States suspended arms shipments to Cuba on 14 March 1958.<sup>5</sup>

The significant element in the two contrasting statements above is that at the very beginning of the Castro-Guevara era a conflict of interpretation of Cuba's future was in evidence. As indicated earlier, neither Fidel Castro nor Che Guevara nor any of the leaders of the 26th of July Movement had an ideological basis on which to base a Cuban Government; nor did they have a concept for an organization for operating the Government. During and after 1959, Castro's problem was centered around the need to fill the political vacuum created by Batista's hasty departure. Che Guevara, in consort with Raul Castro, provided the postwar ideological direction to fill that vacuum.

Che Guevara's inclinations toward Marxism have been discussed, but in 1960 he erased any doubt as to his convictions when he said: "One ought to be a 'Marxist' with the same naturalness with which one is a 'Newtonian' in physics, or 'Pasteurian' in biology. . . ."<sup>6</sup> Raul Castro's Communist affiliations were already evident in 1959, inasmuch as he "had been a member of the Communist youth organization as a student at Havana University and had visited Prague in 1953. . . ."<sup>7</sup> On the other hand, there is no evidence that Fidel Castro was a Communist in 1959. As late as 22 May 1959, he stated that "Communism kills man by wiping out his freedom."<sup>8</sup> The Cuban white paper, prepared in 1961 by the U.S. Department of State, was unable to establish that Castro was a

Communist in 1959; and Gen. C.P. Cabell, then Deputy Director of the U.S. CIA, testified before the Senate Internal Security Subcommittee in November 1959: "We believe that Castro is not a member of the Communist Party, and does not consider himself to be a Communist."<sup>9</sup> It was not until December 1961 that Fidel Castro proclaimed to the world: "I am a Marxist-Leninist and will be a Marxist-Leninist until the last day of my life."<sup>10</sup> Events between late 1959 and December 1961 reflect the impact which Che Guevara and Raul Castro had on the Cuban political scene and on Fidel Castro himself.

Immediately after the war, Fidel Castro was busy exploiting the popularity he had gained during and following the war. The euphoria in which he bathed appears to have made him oblivious to the "real world" of his government: he repeatedly contradicted the realities of the Urrutia and Cardona policies as he promised the Cuban people a new utopia. One source noted that the "contradictions between what the government ordered and what Castro did became so flagrant that on the 13th of February Jose Miro Cardona handed in his resignation as Prime Minister, with the suggestion that Fidel Castro should take over his job."<sup>11</sup>

With Fidel easting about the country, giving an endless stream of speeches, Raul and Che were working subtly to gain inroads for the Cuban Communist Party (PSP). The confusion and governmental chaos of the postwar period dictated the need for a political group which was well organized and ready to step into the breach; "of the political groupings, the Communists alone provided the ideological and political unity" that the revolutionary government needed.<sup>12</sup> With the help of Raul and Che Guevara, the PSP began to gain the positions it needed to achieve total control of the Cuban Government. To make these gains, it was necessary that

the 26th of July Movement be discredited or abolished. Guevara suggested on 19 February 1959 that the "days of the 26th of July Movement might be numbered" and that it was no longer needed.<sup>13</sup> Fidel Castro, nearly quoting Guevara's earlier statement, said on 28 October 1959: "The 26th of July was an instrument to gain power. It no longer exists."<sup>14</sup>

"Between May and November 1959, the PSP abandoned its direct frontal attacks on the 26th of July Movement labor leaders and convinced Raul Castro that only the Communists could dominate the labor movement so completely that it would not oppose the regime."<sup>15</sup> In November 1959 at the National Congress of the Confederation of Workers in Havana, Fidel Castro, at the urging of Raul Castro, personally intervened on the Communists' behalf, assuring the Communists a foothold in what had before been an anti-Communist door. By October 1960 the Communists were in control of the unions, the press, and the army, and many of the patriots who had fought under Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra had been eliminated from the revolutionary government.

The intricate political shifting which occurred in 1959 need only be summarized to reflect the impact of Guevara and Raul Castro on the ultimate make-up of the Cuban Government: Major Pedro Diaz Lanz, head of the air force, defected in June under pressure; President Urrutia was dismissed in July for having complained about the inroads the Communists were making into the Government; Major Hubert Matos, one of the true heroes of the war, was arrested in October and sentenced in December to 20 years imprisonment; two chief ministers, Perez and Ray, were removed because of sympathy for Matos; and Che Guevara replaced Filipe Pazos as the president of the Cuban National Bank.<sup>16</sup> The significant aspect of this period was the eviction of men who had been mainstays of the 26th of

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July Movement, men who were purged from their positions because they attempted to make the revolution proceed along the direction promised by Fidel Castro during the war.

With the advantage of retrospection, it is evident that Fidel Castro was a visionary and a planner, but with all his vision for a new Cuba, he had no idea how to implement his ideas. The 1953 attack on Moncado Barracks was a masterpiece of detailed planning; under Fidel's leadership the execution was atrocious. In preparing for the landing on Cuba in 1956, Fidel could recognize the need for guerrilla training but called on another individual to conduct the actual training. One author has suggested that Castro

... is a charismatic rabble-rouser, able to take his cue from his emotions and transmit them to the multitudes. He has never gained the self-discipline that would enable him to develop an orderly or a comprehensive plan of administrative action. Administrative tasks fell, inevitably, to a disciplined group of trained and dedicated Communists, operating behind his messianic control of public opinion.<sup>17</sup>

One member of this "disciplined group" was Che Guevara, who had the requisite talent for organization which Castro lacked. Guevara was "a man of action rather than words. He was silent and thoughtful, but had what can only be called a fiendish gift for organization and planning."<sup>18</sup>

In his eulogy to Guevara, Fidel enumerated the tasks which Guevara had performed while a Cuban politician: president of the National Bank, director of the National Planning Board, Minister of Industries, commander of military regions, and the head of political or economic or fraternal delegations.<sup>19</sup>

The breadth and diversity of these

responsibilities are tributes to Castro's reliance on Che Guevara.

Despite the major role Guevara played in the Cuban politics, it was in the economic sphere that the impact of Che Guevara has been most lasting. The economic failures which the Castro government has experienced since 1959 can be traced directly to Che Guevara or, at least, to the influence of Che's economic theories. With all of his organizational ability, the theories to which Guevara subscribed proved disastrous when applied to a "real world" Cuba. Furthermore, much of Guevara's theorizing was predicated on his conviction that U.S. "imperialism" was the major cause for all of Latin America's problems, a conviction which solidified during his Guatemalan experience.

In the *Coronet* article of February 1958, which resulted from an interview of Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra, Castro stated:

Let me say for the record that we have no plans for the expropriation or nationalization of foreign investments here. True, the extension of government ownership to certain public utilities—some of them, such as the power companies, U.S.-owned—was a point of our earlier programs; but we have currently suspended all planning on this matter. I personally have come to feel that nationalization is, at best, a cumbersome instrument.<sup>20</sup>

In the same interview Castro went on to say that "foreign investments will always be welcome and secure here."<sup>21</sup>

Despite Castro's promises, on 4 March 1959 the Cuban Government took control of the Cuban Telephone Company, a U.S.-owned firm.<sup>22</sup> This intervention was the responsibility of the Department for Industrial Development of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA). Che Guevara

was then the head of that department.

On 17 May 1960 the National Bank of Cuba informed U.S. oil companies in Cuba that they would be required to purchase 300,000 tons of Russian crude oil during the balance of 1960.<sup>23</sup> Che Guevara was then the head of the National Bank.

On 19 October 1960 the United States imposed a partial embargo on goods to Cuba in retaliation for numerous seizures of U.S.-owned property during 1959-60. To counter this economic blockade and to provide a substitute for American trade, Cuba and Guevara turned to the Soviet bloc countries. At the beginning of 1960 only 2 percent of Cuba's foreign trade was with the Communist bloc; in 1961 this figure had jumped to 75 percent.<sup>24</sup>

On 2 January 1961 Fidel Castro ordered the U.S. Embassy staff reduced to 11 persons, and on 3 January 1961 the United States officially terminated all diplomatic relations with the Castro government.<sup>25</sup>

Free of U.S. influence and "imperialist exploitation," Guevara could now proceed to transform Cuba into "the most highly industrialized country of Latin America..."<sup>26</sup> For Cuba, Guevara said,

... industrialization is a good thing which will bring immediate benefits to the population and which will enable us to liquidate unemployment, the chronic scourge of Latin America. In addition, we have no agricultural problems. The creation of cooperatives has not only aroused no resistance: it is one of our most popular revolutionary measures.<sup>27</sup>

The Minister of Industries, Che Guevara, began a massive program of factory building—to provide homemade substitutes for items which had previously

been imported. In April 1961 Guevara predicted an annual economic growth rate of 10 percent; by 1980 the per capita net income would be, he predicted, \$3,000.<sup>28</sup> In reality the per capita income in 1958 was \$433 and had dropped by 1968 to \$418.<sup>29</sup>

Certain planning details had been overlooked, however, and the Minister of Industries discovered that the raw materials he needed for his factories cost nearly as much to import as the imported finished product. Furthermore, the Soviet Union had been quick to promise assistance, but had proved to be less quick to deliver. In October 1961 Guevara commented that raw materials and replacement parts were the two main problems in his industrial program. He also admitted that the quality of the items produced had deteriorated; there were production problems, sabotage, and electric power problems, among others.<sup>30</sup>

With resources and, more importantly, manpower diverted to the new factories, emphasis shifted away from Cuba's economic mainstay—sugar. In 1958 sugar production was about 6 million tons; in 1961 the crop was 6.8 million tons; in 1962 production had dropped to 4.8 million tons; and in 1963 the production was 3.8 million tons, the lowest since World War II.<sup>31</sup> The sugar (and therefore the economic) problems were compounded by the trade agreements which Cuba made with the Soviet Union. Russia bought the Cuban sugar only on a "barter" basis, always with terms favorable to herself. Russia paid less than the U.S. preferential price for sugar while charging more for items sold, such as minerals. For example, "experts have calculated that Russia's satellites pay 60 percent more for crude oil than if they bought it from the West in the free market, and 36 percent more for lead."<sup>32</sup> The exploitation was obvious. Yet, until the mid-1960's, Guevara's dislike for the

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United States appears to have blinded him and Fidel Castro to the fact that the Soviets were exploiting Cuba far more than the United States had done in her worst years.

Fundamental to Che Guevara's economic policies, in consonance with traditional Marxism, was the belief that the equality of man could only be established through a classless society. In such a society, work is not a commodity but is a contribution to the welfare of the state as a whole. In numerous speeches Guevara's main effort was to educate the populace that true social and economic equality would come only as a result of substituting "moral" for "material" values. On 18 June 1960, in a speech to an assembly of workers, Guevara noted that "industrialization is built on sacrifices."<sup>3</sup> He went on to talk of Cuba's wealth as the "public patrimony" and discussed in tedious detail the sacrifices the workers must make for the good of the state. "Thrift" and "increased production," to enable the state to create more capital and thus more wealth for all the individuals, were the themes of this early statement.

Guevara reemphasized the workers' responsibilities on 30 April 1961 in a television speech to the country:

The working classes still are unaware of their potential, their duties, their rights. There has been much propaganda about voluntary work—the cutting of sugar cane by people who do not participate directly in production. You know that sugar cane is processed the day it is cut. When the worker takes off on Sunday, even though there is still unfinished work, just because he has made enough to cover his most pressing needs, it shows there is no spirit of improvement in his life, that there is a lack of understanding of the needs of the Revolution. . . . But

what I wanted to stress is that the working class is not putting forth its full effort.<sup>34</sup>

Guevara's most sophisticated statement on this theme of socialist necessity came in 1965 in a letter to Carlos Quijano, editor-publisher of the Uruguayan weekly, *Marcha*. In the letter Guevara wrote that "in moments of extreme danger, it is easy to activate moral incentives: To maintain their effectiveness, it is necessary to develop a consciousness in which values acquire new categories. Society as a whole must become a huge school." In order for moral incentive to develop in culture, he wrote,

. . . work must acquire a new condition; man as a commodity ceases to exist, and a system is established that grants a quota for the fulfillment of social duty. The means of production belong to society, and the machine is only the front line where duty is performed. Man begins to free his thought from the bothersome fact that presupposed the need to satisfy his animal needs by working. He begins to see himself portrayed in his work and to understand its human magnitude through the created object, through the work carried out. This no longer involves leaving a part of his being in the form of labor power sold, which no longer belongs to him; rather it signifies an emanation from himself, a contribution to the life of society in which he is reflected, the fulfillment of his social duty.<sup>35</sup>

While Guevara wrote these comments with an eye toward the Cuban worker, his description of what man's orientation should be more aptly fitted his own philosophy than that of the Cuban worker. "Fulfillment of social duty"

became a significant guidepost for Guevara's last endeavors. The Cuban "socialist man" did not respond well to Guevara's exhortations, however, and the worker dedicated to production for the good of the state and not himself is yet to be seen in Cuba.

In his 1968 anniversary speech on the 26th of July, Fidel Castro himself "expounded on the moral aspect of the new revolutionary offensive,"<sup>36</sup> but to little avail. In mid-December 1968 an active campaign was begun to increase the number of Cuban women in the labor force to compensate for the "declining productivity of male workers."<sup>37</sup> For all of his rhetorical skill, Fidel Castro seems as unable to find the key to the "socialist man" as was Guevara.

In 1964 Guevara announced the cancellation of the industrialization until 1970 and indicated that "sugar now has first priority in the distribution of resources."<sup>38</sup> In his 10-year agricultural development plan of 1 January 1969, Fidel Castro predicted that between 1970 and 1980, the Cuban GNP would grow at 15 percent annually. There was no mention of industrialization.

In December 1964 Guevara was at the United Nations, where he delivered a particularly scathing attack on the United States and predicted that continental revolution was just around the corner. From New York he went on a world tour, always preaching communism and revolution. On this trip, however, he also attacked the economic policies of the Soviet Union and claimed they were "following trade policies toward the underdeveloped countries that were virtually identical with those of American imperialism."<sup>39</sup> These attacks no doubt embarrassed Castro, especially considering that his INRA director, Carlos Rodriguez, was in Moscow in February 1965 negotiating another trade agreement to help shore up the Cuban economy.

When Guevara returned to Havana in March 1965, Castro was clearly unhappy with his conduct. Guevara, however, was displeased with the terms of the agreement that Rodriguez had made with the Soviets, an agreement which contained stern instructions to the Cubans that their attempts at industrialization were to cease.<sup>40</sup>

One report, in early 1965, alleges that, at a cocktail party at the Soviet Embassy, Guevara said of the Soviets: "Selling old and brokendown machines to another Socialist country is no kind of Communist brotherhood. If you want to help, you can give them away, hut you've no right to make money out of another country's needs."<sup>41</sup>

With the Cuban economy visibly sagging under the weight of the errors Guevara had made and with Castro politically embarrassed by his lieutenant's outspoken criticism of Cuba's major economic supporter, it appeared inevitable that Che Guevara would leave his adopted country to find another cause to which he could tie himself "by a bond of romantic sympathy for adventure."

In April 1965 Che Guevara relieved himself of all official governmental and political responsibilities and his Cuban citizenship. Once again Che was the revolutionary-at-large, uncommitted to any single ideology or country.

Or so it would have seemed.

### III—CHE THE ABSENTEE

"... the responsibility of being a Cuban revolutionary. . . ."<sup>41</sup>

As indicated previously, Che Guevara was in New York in December 1964. On 11 December 1964 he delivered what was to be his last public speech. This speech, delivered to the General Assembly of the United Nations, contained unequivocal condemnation of North American "imperialism," not only in Latin America, but in all the world. In

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addition, Guevara devoted a large segment of this particular speech to stating his concern for the problems of Africa, especially the Congo. His stated concern for Africa provides the first key to Guevara's other activities which, until recently, had been clouded by a cloak of mystery and intrigue—the period of March 1965 to mid-1967.

Following his 1964 appearance at the United Nations, Che Guevara went to Algiers, then to other African, European, and Asian countries. It was during this trip that Guevara "arranged for his voluntary incorporation in the struggle in the Congo."<sup>2</sup> When he returned to Havana on 14 March 1965, Guevara solicited, and apparently received, Fidel Castro's assistance in gathering together men and material which Guevara would take to Africa.

Considering the friction now known to have existed between Castro and Guevara in early 1965, one may speculate that Fidel was only too pleased to assist Guevara in an escapade which would physically separate him from Cuba. Interestingly, when Guevara "disappeared" from public view in March 1965, the political speculators concentrated primarily on the theory that Castro and Guevara had had a disagreement sufficiently serious to warrant Guevara's elimination from the Cuban scene. The truth of this speculation has only recently been recognized, for during 1965 Castro attempted to "keep up appearances." Guevara was "mentioned favorably by Castro in speeches, his pictures were prominently displayed during the annual July 26 celebration, and Cuban publications ran photographs of the Castro brothers with Guevara's wife and daughter at a May Day Rally."<sup>3</sup>

Whatever may have been his true motivation, Fidel Castro "surreptitiously helped Che gather together a force of more than 115 Cuban guerrillas who embarked for the Congo to join the Kinshasa rebels, with Che personally in

charge."<sup>4</sup> Despite much assistance from the Soviets, guerrilla direction from the Algerians, and Che Guevara's significant contribution, Che's experience with the Africans was to end miserably. In late 1965 the rebels were "unable to defend their well-fortified base at Atshoma," and Che returned to Havana, disgusted.<sup>5</sup> Guevara would later comment that the Kinshasa cause failed "because the human element failed." "There is no will to fight, the leaders are corrupt, in a word, there is nothing to do."<sup>6</sup>

To compound the complexities of Che Guevara's activities in this period, it is noteworthy that Che's letter of resignation, which was dated 1 April 1965, was not made public until 3 October 1965. The question of authenticity, which has been raised by some, does not appear relevant. What is relevant is the timing of Castro's revelation of the letter, which coincides exactly with the time when Guevara was finishing his African episode in failure. It seems clear that Che's "letter" was held by Castro until such time as Guevara's success or failure in Africa was known. Considering the failures Castro and Guevara had suffered in attempting to export revolution, another major failure, such as the African campaign, would have severely weakened Castro's position in the Latin American community of nations.<sup>7</sup> Had Guevara enjoyed success in the Congo, one may reasonably speculate that Guevara's disassociation from the Cuban Government would never have occurred, and the "letter" would never have been made public.

Guevara's activities in late 1965 and all of 1966, established only after his death, indicate that Castro and Guevara had chosen to bring their efforts to create revolution back to the Western Hemisphere. On 2 December 1965 a man using the name of Ramon Benitez Fernandez obtained Uruguayan passport no. 130220 in Montevideo. On 22 December 1965 the same man, then using the name of Adolfo Mena

Gonzalez, obtained a second Uruguayan passport, no. 136748. Both of these men were Che Guevara.<sup>8</sup> Although Guevara would later use both of these passports, it is not clear why he bothered to obtain two, both false.

On 15 February 1966, his daughter's 10th birthday, Guevara sent her a note from "somewhere in Latin America."<sup>9</sup> Precisely what his itinerary was in the first few months of 1966 has not been definitely established, but one source suggests that he was "at one point in Guatemala, at another in Venezuela. He certainly went through Peru, also perhaps Colombia."<sup>10</sup> These and subsequent movements indicate that Guevara was most likely traveling about Latin America soliciting support for what he hoped would be the start of a continental revolution.

Despite his April 1965 letter of resignation, there is reliable evidence that Guevara had not, in fact, broken completely with his Cuban companeros. The 12 August 1966 entry in "Ponbo's Diary," one of the documents captured by the Bolivian Army in 1967, reads:

We received a report from Manila in which they say that Pacho departed for here [Bolivia] on the 20th with a list of instructions from Mongo. He will arrive on about the 24th. Unfortunately, they did not say they were sending anyone to make contact with the front as we had hoped.<sup>11</sup>

Manila was the code word for Cuba; Mongo was one nom de guerre used by Guevara in his Bolivian campaign. "Rolando's Diary" was also captured following Che's defeat in Bolivia. The September 1966 entry in this diary reads:

We met with Ramon at the S. Farm. We were extraordinarily moved when we recognized him. We continued our training until

October 22, 1966, at which time we went on leave after having been visited by C., who spent 3 days with us.<sup>12</sup>

Rolando was undergoing training in Cuba in September 1966; Ramon was another alias used by Guevara; "C" was Rolando's code for Fidel Castro. Although the precise location of "S. Farm" is not known, it is clear that the farm—and Guevara—were in Cuba in September 1966.

On 9 October 1966 Guevara, for reasons unknown, entered Madrid through the Barajas airport. He left Madrid, through the same airport, on 19 October 1966. From 19 October until 7 November, Che's movements have not been precisely pinpointed. Nonetheless, the route by which he arrived at Nancahuazu, Bolivia, where the first guerrilla base had been established, was circuitous. About the first of November 1966, he arrived in Sao Paulo, Brazil, and about 2 days later left for La Paz, Bolivia, thence to Nancahuazu.

The responsibility of being a Cuban revolutionary,<sup>13</sup> as Che Guevara saw that responsibility, has considerably more meaning than simply applying one's talents to successful revolution in one's adopted country. Che Guevara did not intend to resign his affiliation to either Castro or the Cuban revolutionary cause. The Che Guevara of 1966, unlike the Guevara of 1956, had visions which encompassed, if not the world, at least the hemisphere. His vision was to expand the Cuban cause so that it might become a Latin American cause. He would pursue that cause until his death, searching, it now seems, to prove a theory of revolution which was destined to fail.

#### IV—CHE THE REVOLUTIONARY BOLIVIAN

"... the penalty for a false theory is military defeat. . . ."<sup>14</sup>



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The "new stage" which Che Guevara began on 7 November 1966 proved to be no more successful than the numerous earlier attempts by Castro and Guevara to export their Cuban experience to other nations. By both word and deed they had made it clear since 1959 that their dedication to the conquest of "imperialism" in other countries was equal to their dedication to "socializing" Cuba itself.

On 18 April 1959, in an interview with two Communist Chinese journalists, Guevara said: "Our revolution has set an example for every other country in Latin America." He went on to say: "We have proved that an uprising can begin even when there is only a small group of fearless men with a resolute will. . . ."<sup>2</sup> Within 6 months of coming to power, Castro and Guevara commenced the task of internationalizing their revolution and providing assistance to further their Cuban "example." Haiti, the Dominican Republic, Nicaragua, and Panama were the first to feel the sting of Castro-supported incursions. None of these four efforts were successful. One author has suggested that these first efforts did not reflect a "policy" of the Castro government, but "reflected, rather, the exuberance of the revolutionary spirit. . . ."<sup>3</sup> There is little factual basis for this opinion, and Castro himself refuted this theory when he stated in July 1960: "We promise to continue making the nation the example that can convert the Cordillera of the Andes into the Sierra Maestra of the hemisphere."<sup>4</sup>

In September 1960, in his "First Declaration of Havana," Fidel made public his initial blueprint for revolution in Latin America and proclaimed that it is the duty of oppressed people "to struggle for their liberation."<sup>5</sup>

On 8 August 1961, in a speech to the Alliance for Progress Conference at Punta del Este, Uruguay, Che Guevara attempted to ease the fears of much of the hemisphere, as he promised:

We cannot stop exporting an example, as the United States wishes, because an example is something intangible that transcends borders. What we do give is a guarantee that we will not export revolutions, we guarantee that not a single rifle will leave Cuba, that not a single weapon will leave Cuba for battle in any other country of America.<sup>6</sup>

Despite Guevara's promise, however, Ecuador suffered a Castro-sponsored invasion in 1962, followed by another Cuban effort in 1963 against the Dominican Republic.<sup>7</sup> Again, the attempts were unsuccessful. Aside from the actual overt activities, Cuba also became the Latin American training ground for indoctrination, guerrilla warfare, and terrorism. One source estimates that in 1962 alone, 1,000 to 1,500 young men went to Cuba for such training.<sup>8</sup>

Following Cuba's exclusion from the OAS in early 1962, Fidel issued his "Second Declaration of Havana," in which he asserted that progress in the hemisphere was no longer possible except through violent revolution: "the duty of every revolutionary is to make revolution."<sup>9</sup>

In September 1963 Guevara reiterated the contention that Cuba was the vanguard for continental revolution. He wrote:

In general, objective conditions exist in this hemisphere that drive the masses to violent actions against the government of the bourgeoisie and the landowners. Power crises and also subjective conditions exist in many other countries. Of course, in countries where all conditions are found, it would actually be criminal not to act to seize power. In those others in which this does not occur, it is right for other alternatives to

appear and for the decision applicable in each country to arise out of theoretical discussion. The one thing history does not tolerate is errors on the part of analysts and executors of proletarian policy. No one can seek command of the vanguard party through an official diploma granted by a university. To be the vanguard party is to be at the head of the working class in the struggle for power, to know how to guide it toward seizure of that power, even leading it through shortcuts. This is the mission of our revolutionary parties, and analysis must be profound and exhaustive so as to prevent mistakes.<sup>10</sup>

In 1964 Peru, Argentina, and Honduras received the attention of the "vanguard party" of Fidel Castro, while Venezuela sought OAS sanction against Cuba for smuggling arms into Venezuela the previous fall. Paraguay was the object of a Castro-supported invasion in 1965.<sup>11</sup> None of these attempted invasions were completed nor were they coordinated with the orthodox Communist Party in the country concerned.

A noteworthy milestone in the Cuban attempts to export revolution by violent means was the first Afro-Asian-Latin American Peoples Solidarity Conference. This conference, more commonly called the Tricontinental Conference, met in Havana from 3 to 15 January 1966. To understand the significance of this conference, it is necessary to briefly summarize Castro's relations with the Communist Parties of Latin America since 1961.

When Fidel pledged his loyalty to Marxist-Leninism in December 1961, noted earlier, he did not pledge that he would conform to the traditional dictates of the Communist ideology. And he has not done so. As a result of his lack of conformity, as well as his personal efforts to invade other Latin

American countries without consulting the orthodox parties, "relations with the orthodox Communist parties and the Russians have been filled with tension and disagreement."<sup>12</sup> When the Russians backed down in the 1962 missile crisis with the United States, for example, Castro and Guevara saw it as a "capitulation,"<sup>13</sup> and this "capitulation" was an important cause for Guevara's eventual denouncement of the Soviet Union. The chief source of disagreement in Cuban relations with other pro-Soviet Communists has been the method of revolution. The violent method advocated by Guevara and Castro had an undeniable and unpalatable Chinese tinge, in direct opposition to the Soviet "peaceful method" to achieve control.

In November 1964 some compromise was obtained when Castro, the Russians, and the Latin American orthodox parties agreed on the list of countries which were "ripe" for Castro-style revolution, while in other countries Castro agreed to work through the orthodox parties.<sup>14</sup>

At the Tricontinental Conference in 1966, Fidel quickly gave notice that the 1964 agreements were not to last. Invitations for the conference were controlled by Castro and were sent only to prorevolutionary delegates.<sup>15</sup> At the time of this conference, firm plans had already been made for the campaign in Bolivia, a country which was not on the aforementioned list of countries for Castro-style revolution. In his closing speech Fidel clearly stated his position, when he said: "We believe that in this hemisphere in the case of all or almost all peoples, the struggle will take on the most violent form."<sup>16</sup>

The most significant result of the Tricontinental Conference, however, was the formation of the OLAS, the Latin-American Solidarity Organization. With Fidel Castro as its creator and chief director, the OLAS was organized to control and coordinate all the

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revolutionary activities in the Western Hemisphere. As the *World Marxist Review* stated, the OLAS was "prompted by the objective need to have common revolutionary tactics and strategy in this part of the world where U.S. imperialism is most 'sensitive' and therefore particularly aggressive towards the liberation movement."<sup>17</sup>

When the OLAS met in conference from 31 July to 10 August 1967, Fidel Castro solidified his position as self-acclaimed leader of Latin American revolution. His condemnation of the orthodox parties and of Russia herself left little doubt that a schism existed between Castroism and traditional Soviet communism. Castro's "steadfast insistence on his viewpoint and his unwillingness to compromise, as he did in Havana in 1964, gives the Soviet-orthodox party group in Latin America no real alternative but to move away from Cuba."<sup>18</sup> Such a division cannot but hinder the revolutionary goals of the Communists, whether Castroite or orthodox. In reviewing the first OLAS conference, the pro-Soviet *World Marxist Review* noted that "Latin American revolutionary unity is an essential condition of victory; without it victory will at best be postponed for a very long time."<sup>19</sup>

Though he was not in attendance at the meeting, Che Guevara was elected the honorary chairman of the first OLAS conference. As the keynote for the conference, Guevara, who was already in Bolivia, wrote an article which provided the foundation for the conclusions of the conference. Published in April 1967, before the conference, the article read, in part:

Let us sum up our hopes for victory: total destruction of imperialism by eliminating its firmest bulwark: the oppression exercised by the United States of America. To carry out, as a tactical method, the peoples gradual

liberation, one by one or in groups: driving the enemy into a difficult fight away from its own territory: dismantling all its assistance bases, that is, the dependent territories. . . .

How close we could look into a bright future should two, three or many Vietnams flourish throughout the world with their share of deaths and their immense tragedies, their everyday heroism and their repeated blows against imperialism, impelled to disperse its forces under the sudden attack and the increasing hatred of all peoples of the world.<sup>20</sup>

These comments by Cuba's chief guerrilla form the fundamental issue at stake in the Castro-Guevara program for continental revolution. By forcing the United States to spread its strength and resources in a series of "Vietnams," Guevara saw the ultimate destruction of the U.S. "imperialist" system. It was to this end that Che Guevara arrived in Nancahuazu, Bolivia, on 7 November 1966. The hope that the influence of the United States would be destroyed in this hemisphere provided the impetus for what became Che Guevara's final revolutionary endeavor.

Equally important, however, was Castro's need for a significant victory—a victory which would prove his right to the leadership he had assumed in the hemisphere. With his continuing disagreement with both the orthodox parties and their theories of operation, Fidel had need to prove that his, and not their, approach was the correct one to achieve Latin American—and world—revolution.

The fundamentals of this Cuban theory had been formulated in 1959 when Che Guevara penned his guerrilla primer, *Guerrilla Warfare*. The lessons which Guevara learned from his Cuban

experience and which were the bases for his manual, were three:

1. Popular forces can win a war against the army;

2. It is not necessary to wait until all conditions for making revolution exist; the insurrection can create them;

3. In underdeveloped America the countryside is the basic area for armed fighting.<sup>21</sup>

Guevara insisted that the Cuban revolutionaries were not influenced by Mao Tse-tung, and Régis Debray stated that Guevara and Castro were exposed to Mao only "after the 1958 summer offensive: to their surprise, they found in this book [Mao's *Problems of Strategy in Guerrilla War Against Japan*] what they had been practicing under pressure of necessity."<sup>22</sup> Despite this alleged lack of early familiarity with the Chinese theorist, Guevara's "lessons" smack strongly of Chinese orientation. Only in the second item does he tend to deviate from the Chinese line. Mao wrote that "because guerrilla warfare basically derives from the masses and is supported by them, it can neither exist nor flourish if it separates itself from their sympathies and cooperation,"<sup>23</sup> which implies that Mao believes "conditions" cannot be created.

If Guevara's book was the "manual" for guerrillas, Régis Debray's *Revolution dans la révolution?*, first published in 1967, added the pure theoretical dimension to the Castro-Guevara principles of guerrilla warfare. Debray, now in prison in Bolivia, is the French-Marxist journalist who went to Bolivia in September 1966 to "make a geopolitical study of the chosen zone" of operations.<sup>24</sup> Debray formally associated himself with Fidel Castro in 1962, although he had studied the Cuban Revolution prior to that time. Debray saw the Cuban experience as the model for all future revolutions and, from his analysis of the Cuban experience, developed what would become the new Castro-Guevara-

Debray theory of revolution for Latin America.

Essentially, Debray agreed with Guevara's conclusions and "lessons," adding only one major element, the element which makes his theory the heresy it is in terms of traditional guerrilla theory. Debray makes it clear that total power, both political and military, must reside with the guerrilla commander in the field. He further concludes that the guerrilla has no need of the Communist Party but will create his political machinery when it is needed. Traditional Chinese theorists had long recognized the value of the countryside, as did both Guevara and Debray, but the Chinese had never suggested that the power of the party organization should be subjugated to the guerrilla field unit. Mao stated: "Our principle is that the Party commands the gun, and the gun must never be allowed to command the party."<sup>25</sup>

Debray's theory as to the Cuban success factors, made without the benefit of personal involvement, fails on at least three counts. He fails to consider that the urban element in Cuba gave Fidel Castro the victory; without the middle-class disenchantment with Batista, Fidel likely would have failed. He ignores the corrupt and inefficient army of pre-1959 Cuba, as well as the ineffectiveness of Batista himself; these were major elements in Castro's victory. Finally, Fidel Castro was not able to "create" his own party when he needed it in 1959 but was forced to turn to the Communist Party already existent and functioning.

In his single admission that perhaps his theory is not infallible, Debray notes,

But one thing appears to be impossible: that a spontaneous insurrection should be able, in a few days, to defeat a modern army, trained and reinforced by a well-equipped North American

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military mission, equipped with shock troops, few in number but aggressive. In short, times have changed: it would be difficult to repeat 1952 in 1966.<sup>26</sup>

Even here, however, his main concern is time, and one must conclude from this passage that Debray believed that, given enough time, his theory would still be valid.

Guevara and Castro have attempted, since 1959, to "repeat 1952" in the 1960's; it proved to be not only "difficult" but impossible. Che Guevara attempted, in November 1966, to "repeat 1956" in 1966. Precisely why Bolivia was selected as the foe for the commencement of Guevara's continental revolution is not entirely clear. Although there is considerable poverty there, as in much of Latin America, other aspects of the country would appear to legislate against selecting it to begin a revolution.

In his manual for guerrilla warfare, Che wrote: "Where a government has come to power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or not, and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerrilla outbreak cannot be promoted. . . ."<sup>27</sup> This dictum was ignored in Bolivia. Elected in July 1966 by more than 60 percent of the votes, President Barrientos was duly elected, popular, and, as it happens, a responsible President.

Again in his book for the learned guerrilla, Che wrote: "The guerrilla fighter needs full help from the people of the area."<sup>28</sup> Yet the Bolivian peasants were indifferent to Guevara's forces. Debray, in an interview in the spring of 1968, stated: "It's true we didn't get the support of the peasants, but neither did we expect it." He goes on to say that the Government "posited the Bolivian nation against strangers. They made me the stranger."<sup>29</sup> One author suggested that if the peasants in the southeast, where Che operated, were

"not very conscious of a sense of nationality, they expressed the much narrower attitude of regional parochialism."<sup>30</sup>

Bolivia was also probably a bad geographic choice. Col. T.I. Dickson, USMCR, who was the American consul in Cochabamba, Bolivia, during the full period in which Guevara operated in his consular district, points out that anti-Communist attitudes in all of the countries surrounding Bolivia would nearly have precluded outside support to Guevara, and success would have raised the "specter of a Communist regime that could not be supplied from the outside and probably would be invaded from the east."<sup>31</sup>

Che wrote that a popular force can defeat an army. The Bolivian Army proved to be more capable than Guevara anticipated and certainly more effective than the Batistan military organization of 1959, on whose merit Guevara had based his postulation. Despite some shortcomings in the beginning, the Bolivian Army proved to be sufficiently resilient to eventually defeat Guevara soundly. Debray, in the 1968 interview noted above, attributes to the army a large share in Guevara's defeat: "Armies here in Latin America are the major obstacle to revolution. . . . It is obvious that the revolution [Bolivia's social revolution of 1952] changed the army."<sup>32</sup>

Debray goes on, in the interview, to say: "The refusal of the party to work with us was a real blow. It meant a lack of contacts with the city."<sup>33</sup> This was the "party" that Debray had written was unnecessary—the guerrilla could create his own organization. "Eventually," he wrote, "the future People's Army will beget the party of which it is to be, theoretically, the instrument: essentially the party is the army."<sup>34</sup> Guevara's army, such as it was, was not the party; and without the Bolivian Communist Party, it failed.

In his book Debray wrote: "Meanwhile, the penalty for a false theory is military defeat, and the cost of military defeat is the butchery of tens and thousands of comrades and men of the people."<sup>35</sup> The "cost of military defeat" in Bolivia, however, was the "hutchery" of a theory of guerrilla warfare and political revolution. The basic precepts of the Cuban theory for revolution proved to be fallacious when applied to the real world of 1966-67. One writer suggests that for Castro, Guevara, and Debray, "revolution began in the cerebrum, not in the stomach, and so the most natural step was to theorize revolution to death in the most metaphysical of terms—to be governed by ideas, rather than the more practical tyranny of need."<sup>36</sup> Perhaps, in general, what Guevara proved in Bolivia was that without the precise conditions which existed in Batistan Cuba, the Cuban model is not at all valid. The Cuban Revolution was unique and must remain so.

In his message to the OLAS conference, Che Guevara, in pleading the case for his continental revolution, suggested at one point: "The time has come to settle our discrepancies and place everything at the service of our struggle."<sup>37</sup> That Guevara was sincere in his plea is evident; he gave his life.

Fidel Castro, who had the most to gain from a Bolivian victory, was not so willing to "place everything" on the line. In the waning months of the Bolivian campaign, Guevara lost contact with "Manila," and there is no evidence that Castro made any attempt to send Guevara assistance. He certainly would have known of Che's plight from the reports published by the Bolivian Government. In his impassioned eulogy to Che, on 18 October 1967, there is not so much as an allusion as to why Castro failed to help Guevara in his darkest hour. Presumably the truth of this curious treason will never be known.

Fidel Castro's rewards from the

Bolivian escapade were negative; his losses were astounding. He lost in his bid to prove his unaccepted theory, and in the process lost two of his most ardent and articulate admirers. Che Guevara was the first renowned guerrilla leader to be taken in battle, and the impact of this blow to Fidel and his cause is yet to be measured.

For the non-Communist nations, the Bolivian experience must surely be a vote of confidence in the ability of free nations to counter the Communist threat. For Latin America, it must surely be a tribute to the ability of Latins to counter the Castro threat. For Castro, it is a significant signal in a long list of unimpressive attempts to export his Castroism.

#### V—CHE: A POSTSCRIPT

"If most men can look forward to nothing more than a lifetime of back-breaking toil which only preserves their misery, violence will always beckon, freedom will ever be under siege."<sup>1</sup>

Considering the significance of Fidel Castro's losses in the Bolivian debacle, one could logically conclude that Castro should reconsider his vision for hemispheric revolution. Such does not appear to be the case. A conference held in Cuba in January 1968 reaffirmed Castro's contention that "revolutionary change to expel the dominating forces and their accomplices can only be achieved through armed struggle and revolutionary violence."<sup>2</sup> In a speech on 19 April 1968, Castro said:

To think that they can even talk of Cuba's returning ever again to that profane indecency which is the OAS! If we ever join a regional body, it will be a regional body of revolutionary countries of Latin America. There is no other historical way out, there is no other path.<sup>3</sup>

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With his best rhetoric Fidel was attempting to keep alive the memory of Che Guevara, to insure that Guevara's "light has not been quenched."<sup>4</sup>

Guevara's legacy to Cuha, however, was one of failure—not success. Guevara's total failure in Bolivia has left Castro's visions irreparably tarnished. Despite Fidel's pledge for continued revolution in 1968, failure was the hallmark of his efforts; "the remnants of guerrilla groups in Guatemala, Venezuela, and Colombia were on the run, and attempts to initiate new guerrilla operations in other Latin American countries were nipped in the bud."<sup>5</sup> Neither the Peruvian coup on 3 October 1968 nor the Panamanian coup on 11 October reflected Castro influence.

As a foil for Castro's continued "irritations," Venezuela enjoyed a successful and peaceful transfer of government in 1968, as Doctor Rafael Caldera of the Christian Democratic Party won the Venezuelan Presidency by 30,000 votes in an election in which 3.7 million votes were cast.<sup>6</sup> The import of the Venezuelan show of democracy should not be lost; it vividly reflects that the goal of representative government in Latin America is not merely the fancy of the United States but is a valid and obtainable goal. To realize the Venezuelan example in other Latin countries, however, much will be demanded from both the United States and the Latin countries themselves.

If Guevara's death has not changed Fidel Castro's vision, it has also neither crased nor corrected the conditions in Latin America which have proved to be fertile ground for insurgency and revolution. The Alliance for Progress, designed and established to attack the social and economic problems on which Castroism feeds, has had measured success. It has also had measured failure.

In the first 7 years of the Alliance, Latin American nations invested over a hundred billion dollars of their own money, compared with \$7.7 billion of

American aid; this is in consonance with the "self-help" principle of the Alliance. During the same period, tax revenues have increased by 30 percent, and gross national products rose by the same percentage.<sup>7</sup> Inflation, always a problem in Latin America, has been reduced significantly in Brazil and Argentina.<sup>8</sup> The conference of American Chiefs of State held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, in April 1967 resulted in the establishment of a Latin American Common Market, which should create the regional economic integration necessary for the Latin countries to stabilize economically.

The Alliance, however, has not proved to be a panacea. There are still social and economic problems which must be solved if the nations of Latin America are to realize political solidarity. The population growth in Latin America is the highest of any major region on earth, and attempts to introduce birth control programs have been vigorously opposed by the Catholic Church.<sup>9</sup> Despite some progress, inflation is still a major problem in most Latin countries. Uruguay, for example, experienced seven currency devaluations in 1967 and a 12 percent rise in the cost of living.<sup>10</sup> The per capita income of the Latin American "poor" continues to rise more slowly than that of the "rich," aggravating the nagging problem of distribution of wealth. Sufficient public and private wealth, either local or foreign, has not been forthcoming to insure overall economic growth in all countries; in large measure the lack of foreign capital is attributable to the fear of the nationalism prevalent in much of Latin America and the fear of resultant instability of the ruling governments.

Professor Frederiek Hartmann, who occupies the Alfred Thayer Mahan Chair at the Naval War College, noted that "the ultimate results of the Alliance for Progress depended in great part on whether Latin American vested interests would consent enough to a self-imposed

social revolution to avoid involuntary reforms of a violent nature on the Cuban model."<sup>11</sup> There are indications that the Latins are not yet so inclined. For example, Guatemalan President Mendez, in January 1968, instituted a 5 percent general sales tax, to "raise about \$15 million for badly needed economic development."<sup>12</sup> The conservative business and landowning class "opposed the financial effort necessary to alleviate the country's backwardness," and forced Mendez to rescind the tax.<sup>13</sup>

Militarily, the Latins seem to be adequate to the task of countering the Castro incursions. The repeated Castro defeats, cataloged elsewhere in this paper, attest to this conclusion. The Military Assistance Program (MAP), as the primary machinery for providing U.S. military aid to Latin America, was reoriented in 1961 from a role of supporting hemispheric defense to one of internal defense to counter the Castro threat and provide some stability in which the Alliance would work effectively.<sup>14</sup> The Bolivian case, however, gives some evidence that the United States has, to date, been unable to fully convince the Latin governments that their most severe need is for internal defense, not for fast jet airplanes, large capital ships, or other material indices of a "modern army."<sup>15</sup> Despite the investment of some \$19 million in MAP assistance in Bolivia, the Bolivian Army was unable to defeat the Guevara threat without additional assistance from the United States; only after a special training group was "loaned" to the Bolivian Army was that army able to effectively counter the ineffective Guevara group.<sup>16</sup>

In writing of conditions in Cuba prior to the revolution, Che Guevara wrote: "... certain conditions existed which were not confined to Cuba, but which it will be hard for other peoples to take advantage of again because imperialism—in contrast to some progressive groups—does learn from its

errors."<sup>17</sup> The Alliance for Progress and the Military Assistance Program are pragmatic indicators that the United States has learned from its experiences with Fidel Castro. Whether either program will enjoy increasing success in the future depends, in large measure, on the Latins themselves.

However, any such success will also depend on the wisdom and faith of the U.S. policymakers. It must be understood that solutions to the problems in Latin America will not be quick or easy. To counter these problems it will be essential to establish firm and constant policies, consistent with the individual needs of the various Latin countries. U.S. policymakers must also recognize that "change" is an irrevocable ingredient of Latin American politics, at least for the foreseeable future, and U.S. policies should reflect this recognition. As Ambassador Linowitz, U.S. representative to the OAS, has suggested, our policy should be such that the Latin American governments:

... will know our policy is not a sterile and negative anti-Castro, anti-Communist commitment; that we know a man is not a Communist just because he longs for change; that we know his support of social progress does not mean he also supports Castro extremism; and that perhaps, above all, we understand that the possibility of success for insurgency exists in every village, every community, every phase of life where the heritage of neglect is greater than the effort to bring about a better life for the people.<sup>18</sup>

It appears unlikely that Fidel Castro will be overthrown by any effort initiated external to Cuba. The Bay of Pigs debacle and the missile crisis seem to have set the tone for a U.S. nonintervention policy in Cuba. If Fidel Castro



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is removed from the Cuban Government, it will necessarily come as a result of the people's disillusionment with their "maximum leader." Conditions in present-day Cuba further seem to indicate that Castro's economic policies will be the major source of Cuban discontent. The support he is now receiving from the Soviet Union, allegedly about \$1 million per day, is enough to provide subsistence, but, as suggested in other sections of this paper, not enough to provide for healthy economic growth on the national level. It has been suggested that the U.S. economic blockade of Cuba should be eased and perhaps diplomatic relations with Cuba be re-established. Such moves would not be in the best interest of the United States and certainly not in the interests of the Latin countries. It is within the economic arena that the Castro government's dissolution will eventually come, for the stagnation that the Cuban people are now suffering cannot be tolerated interminably. There are many Cubans who remember better days—just as there were Cubans in Batista's day who recognized that poverty was neither immutable nor inevitable. When Cuba's ruinous economic policies smother Fidel Castro, it will be an irony of the most pointed nature—for it will have been Che Guevara's past influence

on Cuban national political fortunes which will eventually destroy the government of Fidel Castro, the man who now seeks to preserve the memory and the "light" of Che Guevara.

On balance, there seems to be reason for cautious optimism in Latin America. Recognition of the problems in that area, followed by policies and programs bred and implemented with wisdom, should assure the Western Hemisphere that Che Guevara will remain a revolutionary of the past—and not a martyr of the future.

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### BIOGRAPHIC SUMMARY



Maj. Robert D. Hagan, U.S. Marine Corps, holds a bachelor of arts degree in English literature from the University of Missouri and is a 1969 graduate of the Naval War College, School of Naval Command and Staff.

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Although the force of fanatical passion is far greater than that exerted by any philosophical belief, its sanction is just the same. It gives men something which they think is sublime to fight for, and this serves them as an excuse for wars which it is desirable to begin for totally different reasons. Fanaticism is not a cause of war. It is the means which helps savage peoples to fight.

*Winston Churchill: The River War i, 1899*