

20 Years Ago Ché Guevara Was Murdered by the CIA

More than a Few Good Guerrillas Are Needed to Make Revolution

On October 9, 1967, 20 years ago, Ernesto Guevara, "Ché," was murdered in Bolivia, South America, by direct orders of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Last week, we wrote about how Ché's idea of revolution, through a small guerrilla movement of committed and well-trained men and women, was wrong. The lessons from the failure of this guerrilla movement (known as "foquismo") are important today because although some guerrilla movements, like the NPA in Philippines and the Salvadoran FMLN rely on the masses, they don't fight to destroy capitalism, but rather for a "people's democracy" or some kind of "moderate" capitalism à la Sandinista. At the time Ché's idea of how to make a revolution was deadly wrong, his economic ideas were well ahead of his time as we'll see later.

Ché and Fidel Castro's "foquismo" (the idea that a small band of guerrillas could make the revolution) was expressed clearly by Régis Debray, who joined Ché in Bolivia and when the Bolivian army captured Debray he betrayed Ché (Debray later became a big shot in Francois Mitterrand social-democratic government in France), in his booklet "Revolution Inside the Revolution." This booklet was an attempt to cover revisionism (opportunism inside the revolutionary movement) with left-sounding phrases and actions. The main point of Castro-Debrayism (as foquismo became known) was that a mass-based revolutionary communist movement was NOT needed to make the revolution, that the masses will only be secondary to the revolution. Ché's own revisionism made him put his faith in the totally bankrupt pro-Soviet parties in South America.

Revisionism Betrayed Ché

The "Communist" Party of Bolivia didn't lend Ché the support he was expecting. Oscar Zamora, head of a Marxist-Leninist group who split from the pro-Soviet "C"P of Bolivia, wrote an open letter to Fidel Castro, showing who really betrayed Ché (the letter was reprinted in *World Revolution* (Jan-March 1969), a magazine which PLP printed then.

"Ché's fatal error was to accept the decision of working with the revisionist party. But you (Fidel) will never be able to deny your direct responsibility for this occurrence since you were the one who convened the revisionist Conference with Monje and Codevilla (heads of the pro-soviet "C"Ps of Bolivia and Argentina respectively)...After the Preparatory Meeting, Ché reestablished relations with the Bolivian and Argentine revisionists and other revisionists in Latin America, despite the opinion Ché had of them, particularly with respect to Monje, an opinion which you also confirm in your 'Necessary In-



roduction' (to Ché's Bolivian Diary) when you say, 'Ché did not have the least confidence in Monje.'

"...Your abandonment of the forces of Marxism-Leninism and your alliance with the Latin American revisionists is not the work of chance but is the consequence of your total surrender to the Soviet revisionists. The revolutionaries of the world will never forget that months before having made a pact with revisionists of Latin America, you signed the famous communiqué with the renegade Krushchev, supporting coexistence and the peace road. This communiqué is the most complete negation of the Second Declaration of Havana, which proclaims the armed road and condemns peaceful coexistence...

"...in the evaluation you make of the events in southeast Bolivia, there is the unmistakable stamp of opportunism, since you avoid any form of precise reference to modern revisionism, directed and sustained by the revisionist clique of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, which is responsible in great measure for the break-up of the guerrilla action."

Twenty years later, even the *Financial Times* of London (Oct. 9), confirms this: "[Ché] was betrayed

by the Bolivian Communist Party, which refused to support him (Moscow's hand was seen there by some).

Build a Mass-Based Communist Movement

An article in *PL Magazine* (May 1969), titled "Guevara's Great Adventure," presented the criticism PLP and the then revolutionary communist movement (inspired by the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution of China) made of foquismo:

"...there is little use of scientific communist theory by Ché. He opposes the need for a proletarian party, the cornerstone of Lenin's teaching; makes no conscious fight against bourgeois ideology, revisionism, in the ranks of the communist movement; totally rejects all the theories of People's War, the idea of creating bases amongst the masses, the Marxist concept that the masses make history; and appears to be totally unaware of the class struggle around him. The future is a vague 'socialism.' What it boils down to is to drive U.S. imperialism from South America by means of elite guerrilla bands in order to achieve the second independence. No theory is developed as to what happens then: How is the fight for independence transformed into the rule of the working class?"

"The most telling proof of [Ché's] diary's elitism is in the lack of involvement with the Bolivian people. There are scattered encounters with peasants, most of the time when the guerrillas detain someone who chances on their position...Every month Ché mentions the 'lack of incorporation of the peasants' as a major problem of the guerrillas, yet it seems he expects to win them over by becoming notorious in the area - just by their activity against the troops. 'Through planned terror we can neutralize most of them; support will come later.' But the problem continues...Is this what Fidel meant by 'hostile environment'? In whose interests is this struggle being waged?"

"It is so easy for such an experience to be used as proof that the masses can't be trusted, that a new species of men must make the revolution despite the people...Ché has no concept of a mass line; that is, he does not agree with the aim of communists to unite and organize the masses against their class enemies."

Who Killed Ché?

Given the isolation from the masses of Ché's guerrillas, they were easily tracked down in the southern mountains of Bolivia with the help of the CIA and infra-red imaging devices tested in Vietnam. General Gary Prado Salmón, then a captain who commandeered the Rangers who tracked down Ché's guerrillas, has written a new book titled *The*

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Jesse Jackson Perpetuate Racism

history of racist ideology and practice. However, there are many instances when multi-racial unity has been quite significant in labor struggles, from coal mines to auto plants to California grape fields. This history offers hope for the success of the shorter work week. The most dramatic example of multi-racial unity in the face of rampant Jim Crow and racist hysteria was the 1892 New Orleans general strike. Black and white unions united in the fight for a shorter work week despite vicious race-baiting. They won, with all unions in the coalition sticking together despite bribes and threats of all sorts (Wells and Stodder, 1976).

It will be a difficult struggle to revitalize the labor movement on the basis of militant anti-racism, given the corruption, racism, and class collaborationism of the AFL-CIO leadership today. However, it would again be a mistake to view today's union leadership as the only possible type of leadership. At certain times, major portions of the U.S. labor movement has been anti-racist, including the

years, from 1934 to 1948. Thus, the bankruptcy of today's labor movement is transitory. A small but encouraging development is the rise of InCAR-led union organizing drives in Los Angeles, Delano, Chicago, and New York, as well as vigorous InCAR caucuses in many basic industries, including auto, transit, meatpacking, canning, garment, and farming.

The fight for the shorter work week can be won, then, but only with a totally revitalized labor movement under a leadership like that of the International Committee Against Racism and the Progressive Labor Party.

Conclusion

U.S. capitalism today is in decline relative to other imperialist powers, and as a result is inflicting much economic pain on U.S. workers, especially black workers. The economic platform of Jesse Jackson proposed to do little to ease this pain. Instead, it mainly proposed ways of making capitalism (and hence the exploitation of workers) more efficient through national planning and collaboration of workers with their capitalist enemies. The platform advocated a form of guided capitalism that would tie workers ever more tightly to the government and capitalist class instead of promoting a militant anti-

ests against its capitalist opponents. The Jackson campaign in 1984 misled activists into a false hope that the capitalist system could, through elections and structural reforms, be made to serve the interests and needs of the the working class, especially black workers - and this time his program is even more reactionary. But the realities of capitalism require that workers build their own movement to fight the capitalist class successfully, and ultimately challenge them for political power in revolution. Hence, the reforms that workers need the most sharpen the class conflict and open the way for bigger and more powerful confrontations with the capitalist class until revolution occurs. Building such a movement centering on the fight for a shorter work week as an alternative to Jackson's electoral package reflects this alternative strategy. The threat to working class welfare posed by U.S. capitalism in decline is serious and requires a radical alternative strategy to that of placidly working within the system. Perhaps Jackson activists can now, in hindsight, see the futility of their electoral strategy and put their anti-racist impulses into a movement that, like that of the Paris communards, can storm the heavens and set things right.

The list of references and bibliography contained by writing to *Challenges-PL*, magazine.

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Why Ché's Guerrillas Failed

Immolated Guerrilla* (about to be published in Spain). Prado mentions how his rangers were trained by Green Berets (Special Forces of the U.S. Army), led by Major Ralph W. Shelton. For every guerrilla there were 50 Rangers in the final battle where Ché was captured. Finally after a long fight Ché was captured.

Ché and two other captured guerrillas were transported to a small school house in La Higuera, where they were chained. But Prado doesn't mention in his book what really happened there. Two Cuban-born CIA agents, Gustavo Villoldo Sampera and Felix Rodriguez Mendiguitia (who later headed all the CIA actions in Central America from Ilopango, the El Salvador air force base, and who was part of the Iran-Contra scandal), came to question Ché. Felix couldn't get anything from Ché, and got so mad that he grabbed him by the beard and pulled some hairs. It was then when Ché spit on his face. Felix then tried to hit Ché, but Mario Huerta, a Bolivian Army second lieutenant, grabbed his hand and pulled him away from Ché, sending him to the floor. The angered CIA agent began to insult Huerta, telling him "you shitty savage stupid indian." Huerta took out his gun and almost killed the CIA agent; other Bolivian officers intervened and saved the CIA agent's life. "You'll pay for this very soon," Felix shouted to Huerta. A few months later, Huerta was decapitated.

Later, colonel Zenteno Anaya of the Bolivian army offered sargent Bernardino Huanca and officer Mario Terán a hefty reward if they kill Ché and the other guerrilla. After taking two drinks, both entered the school house and shot Ché and Willy, a Bolivian guerrilla.

According to Gary Prado's book, the order to kill Ché and Willy came from the presidency of Bolivia. But according to the reports by the CIA agents, the order was given to the presidency by the U.S. Embassy in La Paz, capital of Bolivia.

Ché's Advanced Economics

As we have already mentioned, the murder of Ché was a big blow to the idea that a few dedicated guerrillas can make a revolution. But Ché's life offered some positive lessons, particularly his belief in armed struggle (although a mistaken idea of how to make this revolution), particularly in this age of Glasnost and compromising with capitalism.

Apparently, Ché had big differences with Fidel on the question of how to build a revolutionary society. A recent book published in Argentina offers another part of his life, which is obscured by his failed guerrilla activities. The book recaps the earlier works of Ché as the president of Cuba's Central Bank and later as Minister of Industry during the first six years of the Cuban revolution.

According to the *Financial Times* (Oct. 9):

"A doctor by profession (apparently stimulated by his mother's suffering from cancer and his own asthmatic condition), he was none the less well acquainted with the political and economic theories propounded by Marx and Lenin on the problems of governing and managing a revolutionary state.

"His own development of those ideas became part of a controversy which continues to this day in socialist and communist circles.

"His Budgetary System of Finance, introduced when he was Minister of Industry, contrasted with a parallel system of production organization in Cuba,



Ché Guevara dead body is exhibited by Bolivian army. modelled on that of the Soviet Union, known as the Economic Calculation.

"In synthesis, the latter theory emphasized the importance of satisfying the material needs of the population. Out of this, it was argued, the gradual transformation of the population's belief and commit-

ment to a communist way of life would grow.

"The ideas of financial and material incentives to the workforce to raise production were based on such a model. Ché Guevara criticized these as inhibiting the development of a socialist approach to work 'which should stop being an arduous necessity and instead become an agreeable imperative.'

"Such a view is 'loaded with subjectivity and requires the test of experience,' he wrote in 1964.

"He was also in favor of the rapid industrial diversification in Cuba to reduce its dependence on sugar exports...The decision taken by Cuban leader Fidel Castro in 1964 to sign an agreement with Comecom (Eastern European Common Market) and became its major sugar supplier, put an end to the debate.

"The difference did not lead to an open rift, but instead Ché left secretly in 1965, having renounced his adopted Cuban nationality and ministerial post."

Ché's economic ideas also foresaw the need to do away with money in socialist societies, seeing money as the root of inequality. His economics are forgotten and ignored by many revisionists who praise Ché as their "hero," because obviously Ché's ideas in that field go against Glasnost and other capitalist trends in the so-called socialist countries.

PLP's line, put forward in the document *Road to Revolution IV - A Communist Manifesto*, says that workers can be won to the idea of to each according to her/his needs and from each according to her/his commitment as the way to build a classless egalitarian society. The total dependence of Cuba on the Soviet Union and the Glasnost road towards capitalism taken by the Soviet Union, China, etc. shows again that workers must destroy all aspects of capitalism to finally free themselves from the hell we now live under.

*Three Bolivian generals, who participated in the murder of Ché and others members of his guerrilla band, have now written books praising Ché and trying to justify their acts. These butchers know that history is judging them as murderers.



CIA agents who ordered the murder of Ché in La Higuera, Bolivia

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Saturday, November 7, 1987

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