

Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life Study Guide

Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life by Jon Lee Anderson

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Plot Summary

CHE GUEVARA: A REVOLUTIONARY LIFE by Jon Lee Anderson is billed as the definitive work on the life of Che Guevara. Che was a Latin American revolutionary who wanted to bring an end to poverty in Latin America and the Third World. He also wanted to end the injustice of imperialism. Born Ernesto Guevara in Rosario, Argentina, he was raised in comfortable circumstances, since both of his parents were from wealthy families. He developed asthma as a baby and the condition plagued him for the rest of his life. Che attended and graduated from medical school but had an urge to travel. He and some of his friends traveled around Latin America where he was appalled by the poverty of the people and the effects of imperialism. Even though he was never interested in politics, he developed an interest in Marx and socialism.

While traveling, he became involved in the failed Guatemalan revolution and met many people in the revolutionary movement. He met Fidel and Raul Castro in Mexico City, and when Fidel asked him to join the Cuban revolutionary movement, he accepted. The Cubans gave him the name of Che, and he went on to gain international fame as a fearless and cold-blooded revolutionary. He was a strict disciplinarian who never asked others to do anything he wouldn't do himself and because of this, they trusted him.

After the revolution, Che held high posts in the Cuban government. He traveled around the world negotiating trade and military treaties for Cuba and studied socialist models in various countries. He brought these ideas back to Cuba and tried to implement the best programs from the various countries, but he wasn't a politician and wasn't interested in power. Che envisioned revolution throughout Latin America and the Third World that would free them of the effects of imperialism and improve living conditions. But, according to Che, the revolution had to be violent. He did not believe in peaceful co-existence or change through the democratic process; this belief brought him into conflict with other revolutionaries. He left Cuba to fight in the failed Congo revolution and then went to Bolivia to foment revolution. He was executed there in 1967.

The book is very informative though lengthy. The author, Jon Lee Anderson, did a great deal of research and conducted extensive interviews to obtain the information for writing the book, which is evident in the amount of detail that book contains. The book will be of interest to anyone with an interest in the subject or events of that time. It is well worth the time spent reading it.

Chapter 1-2

Chapter 1-2 Summary and Analysis

Ernesto Che Guevara was born in 1928, on either May 14 or June 14. His mother had been three months pregnant when she married and then left Buenos Aires. The baby was born in Rosario with the date of birth stated falsely as June 14 so their families wouldn't know she was pregnant when she married. They used part of Celia's inheritance to buy land to grow yerba mate, the national drink that is like tea. They returned to Buenos Aires in 1929 for business reasons when Celia was due to give birth to their second child. Che's father had an interest in the family shipyard whose business was suffering from the financial mismanagement of his cousin. A fire destroyed the shipyard and Guevara lost his inheritance and now had to live on Celia's inheritance and the income from the yerba mate farm.

At the age of two, Che developed asthmatic bronchitis, a condition he would have for the rest of his life. The family decided not to return to the Misiones plantation because of the damp climate and in 1931, rented an apartment near Palermo Park. They began to spend time in Cordoba province, where Celia had inherited land, because it was healthier for Che. Chapter Two: They moved to Alta Gracia, a spa where they remained for eleven years. At first they stayed in a hotel, but as Che's health improved, they rented a villa and eventually a home on the lake. The family struggled financially since there was a steep fall in the price of yerba mate and the elder Guevara could not find work. They lived off Celia's inheritance during the 1930s in a style well beyond their means.

Che did not attend school until he was nine, due to his health. He was educated at home by his mother until the Argentine authorities ordered him to attend school. His teachers remember him as bright, physically fearless and displaying leadership qualities.

Guevara Lynch became friends with Spaniards exiled in the Spanish Civil War. This affected the ten-year-old Che. During World War II, Guevara Lynch was anti-Nazi and traveled around Cordoba giving speeches but he was basically on the sidelines, as always. Che began high school in Cordoba in March 1942, and the family moved from Alta Gracia o Cordoba.



Chapter 3-4

Chapter 3-4 Summary and Analysis

Guevara Lynch secured employment in Cordoba overseeing the construction of buildings. His income allowed the family to live better and join the Lawn Tennis Club. The teenage Che was now beginning to question the values of his parents. There were many changes in Argentina during this time as the population moved from rural to urban areas. Cordoba was the second largest city in the country. This led to the growth of many shanty towns, including the one across from the family's home. A military cadre overthrew the government and General Pedro Ramirez emerged as the new leader until Juan Domingo Peron came to power three years later. For all practical purposes, Che was politically disinterested at this time.

Ernesto continued his dare-devil stunts throughout high school, where he was popular with his peers. He received good grades and was an avid reader. Ernesto first read Marx at this time but didn't understand it. He became interested in philosophy and began writing; he met many different kinds of people at Celia's salons. Because of all the social activity at the house, he read and studied in the bathroom for hours at a time. He graduated high school in 1946, the year Peron assumed power and secured a paying job as a soils specialist and was assigned to Villa Maria, one hundred-fifty miles away. In March 1947, his family moved to Buenos Aires to Guevara Lynch's mother's apartment. When his grandmother became ill and was dying, Ernesto quit his job and moved to Buenos Aires.

Chapter Four: In Buenos Aires, Ernesto attended the University of Buenos Aires Faculty of Medicine. He was rejected by the military draft due to his asthma so his studies were not interrupted. He worked part-time, spent a great deal of time at his aunt's and traveled when he could. He continued to keep notes on everything he read but wasn't particularly interested in politics. The Cold War was underway and in Ernesto's fourth year of medical school Peron began to limit the Communists.

Ernesto began taking longer trips around Argentina at this time and also began to keep a diary of his daily life. He experienced an urge to travel and see the world. During this time he fell in love with Maria del Carmen "Chichina" Ferreyra, a sixteen year old from a wealthy Cordoba family but her family opposed their proposed marriage. At the end of the school term, he secured employment as a nurse on a ship and spent several months traveling and then returned to school for a semester.



Chapter 5-6

Chapter 5-6 Summary and Analysis

Ernesto travels to Miramar where Chichina is vacationing with her aunt. He is planning a trip with his friend, Alberto, and is planning to ask Chichina to wait for him. While he is traveling, he receives a letter from Chichina breaking off their relationship. Ernesto and Alberto continue their trip around South America. When their bikes gave out, they stowed away on ships, rode in the back of trucks and hitchhiked their way around. They posed as doctors which gained them free food and lodging. Ernesto wrote as they traveled. They visited with various doctors, such as Dr. Hugo Pesce, where they talked of medicine and politics. He occasionally thought of Chichina and decided it was worth it to break with her for the travel experiences he was having. They visited and stayed at many leprosariums, talking with the staff and patients.

Ernesto and Alberto arrived in Bogota where the charter of the Organization of American States was to be signed, and there were protesters and riots. One of the protesters was Fidel Castro Ruz who was a law student in Cuba. After some trouble with the police, they left for Venezuela. There they discussed their predicament. They wanted to travel to Central America and Mexico but were out of money. Ernesto would stay in Caracas and work while Alberto would return to Buenos Aires to complete his studies and would return in a year to continue their travels. One of his relatives would let him fly on their business plane via Miami.

Chapter Six opens as Ernesto returned to Buenos Aires several days after Evita Peron dies. He begins to study for his exams and continues his work at the Pisani Clinic. Ernesto passed his last exam on April 11, 1953 and announced his plans to resume traveling, this time with his boyhood friend Carlos



Chapter 7-8

Chapter 7-8 Summary and Analysis

Ernesto and Carlos depart in July, 1953 and soon arrive in La Paz, Bolivia. There was great deal of political unrest there since the revolt of the previous year. They associated and stayed with members of the Argentine ex-pat community, notably Isaias Nogues, who was in exile as an opponent of Peron. They met a Venezuelan military attached who helped them to obtain the visas they required to travel to Venezuela. Ernesto was interested in the Bolivian revolution and the changes it had brought.

In Cuba, on July 26, there was an attack on the Batista military barracks in Santiago. Both Fidel and Raul Castro were arrested and taken into custody.

After a month in Bolivia, Ernesto and Carlos depart for Lima and then on to Ecuador with Ricardo Rojo. Ernesto knew his family was experiencing financial difficulties and wondered if he should return to Buenos Aires and work to help them, but they told him no so he continued his travels.

In Chapter Eight, Ernesto decided to go to Guatemala to see the leftist revolution that had taken place but they had no money. Ernesto finally sailed for Central America with Gualo. Carlos had gone to Caracas. In Panama, Ernesto wrote travel articles and gave medical lectures to help defray expenses. His hatred of the United States was revealed in these articles. They eventually reached Costa Rica where Ernesto met with Juan Bosch, Romulo Betancourt and Manuel Mora Valverde, to discuss politics. When Ernesto and Gualo went to Nicaragua, they met Ricardo Rohjo and then continued to Managua. There they again met Rojo and Domingo Beverragi. Beverragi drove to El Salvador and Guatemala with Ernesto and Gualo. As a result of the revolution in Guatemala, the holding of United Fruit had been nationalized. As a result, the country attracted hundreds of leftists who wanted to see the results of the revolution.

Rojo introduces Ernesto to Hilda Gadea. Ernesto is trying to secure a job with the Ministry of Health but is not successful. He meets with leftists and Communists from the various countries. His correspondence with his family begins to reveal his revolutionary inclinations.



Chapter 9-10

Chapter 9-10 Summary and Analysis

The Guatemalan revolution was the first political cause that Ernesto identified with and he spent six months trying to find a meaningful job where he could contribute to the revolution. Hilda introduced him to influential people in government and they all met at the home of Professor Edelberto Torres. This is where Ernesto met some Cuban exiles from the Batista regime. Fidel Castro had just received a fifteen-year prison sentence, but the Cubans were still hopeful for their cause.

Ernesto enjoyed his discussions with Hilda and was becoming more attracted to her. He had heated debates with Rojo, who believed that change could come through the electoral process while Ernesto believed in violent revolution against Yankee imperialism. At this time, the CIA was setting up Operation Success to end the Guatemalan situation. Ernesto developed a plan to write a book on the role of a doctor in revolutionary Latin American society.

In order to work as a doctor in Guatemala, Ernesto had to undergo training to validate his degree and for this he needed approval. He decided to leave Guatemala if he wasn't approved. At this time he was also informed that he had to leave the country to have his visa renewed. He went to El Salvador for this purpose and traveled around sight seeing before returning to Guatemala City.

Operation Success was still in progress as the Americans applied more pressure on the Guatemalan regime. The invasion began in mid-June. Chapter Ten opens with the aerial attacks on Guatemala City. This is the first time Ernesto has ever been under fire. He volunteers to work in the health brigades and to patrol at night with the youth brigades. Two weeks later, the provisional government entered Guatemala City and Arbenz sought asylum in the Mexican embassy. Hilda was arrested and Ernesto received asylum at the Argentine embassy. Hilda was released after a few days and Ernesto decided to go to Mexico City. The asylees waited for the government to grant them safe passage in spite of pressure to arrest them. They began granting the safe passage visas in mid-August. Ernesto refused to be repatriated to Argentina and received his visa for Mexico. Hilda waited for her Peruvian papers. Ernesto departed for Mexico in mid-September.



Chapter 11-12

Chapter 11-12 Summary and Analysis

Mexico City attracted many exiles in the 1950s. Ernesto began to look for work, planning to travel across the country and eventually obtain a visa for the United States. He worked at various odd jobs while trying to find a job in the field of medicine. Hilda arrived in Mexico City and began looking for work. Ernesto met the Cuban Nico Lopez, whom he had known in Guatemala. He learned that Castro's followers had been gathering in Mexico City, awaiting the release of Castro and further orders. Mexico would be their base once Castro was free. Their meeting place was the apartment of Maria Antonia Gonzalez. Ernesto was immediately accepted by them.

Ernesto began an internship at General Hospital which included his food and lodging. In spite of this, he moved in with Hilda. This arrangement allowed him to meet more people. In May, 1955, Fidel, Raul and others were granted amnesty and released from prison. At this time, Castro was publicly anti-Communist. Because of the amnesty, Nico Lopez and Calixto Garcia returned to Cuba to meet with Castro; Ernesto begins to think about going to Cuba and meets Raul Castro at Maria Antonia's home.

Chapter Twelve opens with Ernesto meeting Fidel Castro in Mexico in July. Ernesto accepts Fidel's offer to join his guerrilla movement. He was to be their doctor. Where Fidel was motivated by power, Che was motivated by the need for social change. Both felt that the United States was the common enemy. Hilda and Che spent a great deal of time with the Castros. At this time, Hilda was pregnant and they were planning to marry. To Che, it was the honorable thing to do, and they were married on August 18, 1955.

Fidel did his planning in Mexico City and issued "Manifesto No. 1 to the Cuban People," which stated the goals of his July 26 Movement. He departed on a fund raising tour of the United States and returned to Mexico City just before Christmas. His people were arriving in Mexico City and undergoing training in preparation for their return to Cuba.

On February 15, 1956, Che's daughter, Hilda Beatriz, was born.



Chapter 13-14

Chapter 13-14 Summary and Analysis

Ernesto trained for the Cuban revolution. In addition to physical training, he also did much reading on politics and economics. He tried to hide his asthma from the Cubans, afraid that they would consider him to be physically unfit. He became wary of who he and Hilda associated with trying to limit their contacts to the Cuban community. He is not called "Che" by those to whom he is closest. Fidel had appointed him as leader of one of the safe houses.

Fidel broke from the Orotodox party in March 26. He publicly announced that the revolution would take place in 1956, so he had to act soon. Che had plans to send his wife and daughter to Peru when he went to Cuba. Many of the movement's followers were arrested in Cuba in early 1956, and the situation was becoming tense. A Mexican ranch was rented for training the men, and Che was in the first group to go there. Training at the ranch was hard. The movement had rules and disobedience could result in court martial and death.

Che and his group returned to Mexico City in early June. Fidel and two associates were arrested on June 20. This began a round-up of all the Cubans in the movement, including the safe houses and Hilda. Hilda and the baby were released the next day. Che and the men at the ranch were arrested on June 24. The charges were a plot to kill Batista. Che was charged with a visa violation. The press named Che and the link between the Cubans and the Communists. By July 9, all but Che, Fidel and Calixto Garcia had been released. Che had declared his Communist beliefs which infuriated Fidel, who was released on July 24 and had to leave the country within two weeks. Che and Calixto were released in mid-August and also had to leave Mexico. They all went underground and hid in various places in Mexico. They hid for three months moving around to different places in Mexico.

In September, Fidel found a boat to carry them to Cuba and bought it. On November 23, Fidel ordered the men to assemble in Mexico City to prepare to depart for Cuba. They departed on November 25.

Chapter Fourteen begins with their first few days in Cuba. There was an ambush in which Che and others were injured. Their arrival was awaited for the Batista government who executed many of the captured men. Twenty-two of the original eighty-two men survived and made it to their pre-arranged meeting place in the Sierra mountains. Che's group arrived on December 21. They rebuilt their force from local peasants and hid in the Sierra Maestra mountains. Within a month, the band of rebels began to grow and on New Year's day, began moving deeper into the mountains.



Chapter 15-16

Chapter 15-16 Summary and Analysis

Ernesto met Fidel's inner circle and confidants while they were in the Sierra Maestra. Most were not Communists and thought they would replace the corrupt Batista regime with a traditional Western regime. Traitors were executed and one such execution is noted in Che's diary in cold clinical terms. Che was known to be cold-blooded especially when it came to traitors.

A summit was held in February and Fidel wrote another manifesto called "Appeal to the Cuban People." In it, he called for acts of sabotage among other things. He also called for civic resistance from the population as well as asking for money.

Che's asthma was a problem in the humid climate of Cuba. His comrades helped him when it was particularly bad. At one point they left him at a farmhouse and Fidel paid a peasant to go Manzanillo to buy asthma medicines. When he was back at the farm waiting for a group of volunteers to arrive, there was an assassination attempt on Batista's life that failed on March 13. This was done by the group led by Jose Antonio Echeverria which was basically a rival group. The attempt resulted in reprisals.

Chapter Sixteen opens with Che leading the new volunteers to Fidel's camp. There were the usual problems of training them and building their stamina. As this was happening, the political situation was becoming more volatile and there were demands for new elections. The underground support network was becoming more developed and attracted some important people from Cuban society. At the same time, some of the movement's supporters were arrested. Celia Sanchez functioned as Fidel's link with the world.

By April, there were more peasant recruits, and their entire supply system was better organized and more functional. American journalists arrived at the camp to interview Fidel and others. In the following months, the ranks of the rebels grew. In July there were reports of rebel actions around Cuba. By this time, Che commanded seventy-five men and had been promoted to comandante. This rank was the highest level in the Cuban rebel army.



Chapters 17-18

Chapters 17-18 Summary and Analysis

Just as the rebel movement attracted volunteers, there were also many deserters and it was the desertions that bothered Fidel and Che because they knew their positions. Che ordered them tracked and killed for betraying the revolution. Che led his men to attack garrisons and other places in a direction separate from Fidel's men. The police were arresting and killing the rebels around the country. When their coordinator Frank Pais was killed, there were demonstrations and strikes across the country.

By mid-1957, the Batista regime was becoming an embarrassment to the United States. American policy was geared to protect American financial interests in Cuba. Behind the scenes in Washington, the government was hoping Batista would lose the election. While this was going on, there were also increasing tension between Fidel and the urban part of the July 26 Movement when the urban faction tried to curtail the power of Fidel and Che.

On September 5, some of the movement's men were involved in taking the city of Cienfuegos. This was supposed to be coordinated with activities in Santiago and Havana, but nothing materializes in those cities. When the army attacks, hundreds of men were slaughtered. The failed attack resulted in much dissension between the different groups and many blamed Fidel.

In November, Che and his group began to build an infrastructure in the town of Hombrito. They built a dam, hospital, farms, various workshops and started a newspaper. The town was destroyed but the army so Che began to build another base at La Mesa in 1958.

The Cuban economy was booming due to a good sugar harvest and a great deal of American investment. Even though the US Department of State was cooling in its attitude toward Batista, he still had the support of the US military. When a junta was created, Fidel, prompted by Che, caused its destruction by refusing to go along with the terms. The different ideological factions were in increasing conflict because Fidel insisted on his own terms and conditions. By this time, Che had a young communist, Pablo Ribalta, conducting an indoctrination school at his camp. His function was to educate the rebels.

Chapter Eighteen reveals that the rebels began carrying on their battle in other parts of Cuba by December, 1957. Che rebuilt his base at La Mesa and included a small radio station. Fidel and Che planned a major attack in February at Pino del Agua. The attack was a failure and other attacks and acts of sabotage followed and Fidel began to consolidate his power.



Hilda asked to come to Cuba to be by Che's side and he told her no, that he would be moving around a lot. In actuality, he had a lover who was at his side and did not want Hilda around.

Fidel called for a national strike on April 9, 1958, but it was a failure. Batista had received an arms shipment from the Dominican Republic and was planning to mount an offensive against Fidel. The PSP, the Cuban Communist Party, declared its support for the rebels. In preparation for the Batista attack, both Fidel and Che moved their bases. In May, the structure of the movement was revamped, giving Fidel more control. He was now the single leader and commander-in-chief.

The sierra was surrounded by government forces in May and the fighting went on for three months. In July, the various rebel groups united under Fidel's leadership. The PSP was not included in the new unity. Che questioned this but did not receive an answer. By the end of July, government forces began to retreat and a truce was declared on August 11 and prisoners were exchanged. Batista's forces were beaten but not yet defeated. Fidel had plans to expand the battle across the island.



Chapter 19-20

Chapter 19-20 Summary and Analysis

Che and his troops were on the move in September. The government began a propaganda campaign against Che's communism. They arrived in Escambray in October and prepared for the elections to be held in two weeks. The rebels were gaining popularity among the Cuban people. They had an offensive planned for the election and attacked radio stations in Havana, as well as the airport. Fidel remained in the Sierra Maestra working on the various reforms and programs for which he was calling. They had plans to disrupt the elections, and as a result of their actions, voter turnout was less than thirty percent. They were also determined that the February 24 inauguration of President-Elect Rivero Aguero would not take place.

Che built a new base at Cabeilete de Casas and new recruits arrived, some sent by the PSP. He was also building a cadre of advisers for the post-revolutionary period and was already implementing land reform.

In November 1958, Che met Aledia March, a member of the Las Villas underground, who would become his second wife. When her house was raided by the government, she went to live at Che's camp. Che was moving around, attacking and taking various positions with Aleida at his side. Provisional governments were established in each town he captured. By Christmas, Batista had evacuated his family to the US and had planes ready to evacuate himself and his advisers and friends. Che's attack on Santa Clara began and, at a New Year's Eve party, Batista announced that he resigned his Presidency, and he and his group left Cuba during the night. The news reached Santa Clara by day break. In a radio broadcast, Fidel demanded that the military surrender. Che travels to Havana on January 2.

Chapter Twenty opens with Che reaching Havana on January 3. Fidel would use Che to purge the military and to help consolidate his victory. Urrutia was named President, but it was Fidel who was running the show and was Commander-in-Chief of the armed forces. Fidel arrived in Havana on January 8 by which time order had been restored. He delivered a radio broadcast to the nation that night. Members of the new government were named, but as time went on, it was obvious that the real power lay with Fidel. In his villa, Fidel, Che, Raul and their advisers made their plans with the PSP.

Che and Raul were laying the plans for the state security and intelligence service. Che also was involved in the revolutionary justice trials of people from the Batista regime. There were many executions; Che's parents and family, who were in Havana at the time, were horrified. He also began meeting with revolutionaries from around the world, which bothered the U.S. Department of State because it was clear that Cuba would be the staging place for future Latin American revolutions. In February, Fidel became Prime Minister, replacing Miro Cardona, who had resigned.



When Hilda arrives in Havana, she learns about Che's relationship with Aleida and agreed to a divorce. She and the baby would remain in Cuba, where she would be given a job.

A representative from Moscow, Alexandr Alexier, was sent to talk to Che. They were unclear about Fidel's position. Fidel's visit to the United States resulted in a cooling of relations.

Che marries Aleida on June 2, 1959.



Chapter 21-22

Chapter 21-22 Summary and Analysis

On June 12, Che flew to Cairo via Madrid. A substitute had been named and Che's followers were upset that he was gone for three months. The delegation he led visited fourteen countries including Egypt, India, Indonesia, Yugoslavia, Japan and Ceylon to try to establish trade ties. It was felt the US would boycott Cuban sugar and they were trying to develop other markets. Unspoken was their hope for trade ties with Soviet Union and Communist bloc countries since the United States refused to buy all of Cuba's sugar. Diplomatic and trade relations were established with a number of countries. Che did not like the loneliness of official travel. Even though he missed Aleida, he refused Fidel's offers to have her join him.

When Che returned to Cuba, land seizures were taking place. The United States had announced that any American landowners were expected to be compensated promptly if their property was seized.

Alexandr Alexiev arrived in Havana on October 1 under the cover of a Tass journalist. He first met with the PSP leaders and then made arrangements to meet Che, who was to head the new Industrialization Department. Alexandr's first meeting with Che began in mid-afternoon and lasted until dawn. He met with Fidel three days later on October 16. The Cubans and Russians decided to keep their alliance a secret until the Cuban people were ready to accept it.

Chapter Twenty two opens with the Soviet Deputy Premiere visiting Havana on February 4, 1960. Included in the entourage is Nikolai Leonov who Che met in Mexico and who was now with the KGB. They opened the Soviet trade exhibition in Havana. Che was now also the president of Cuba's National Bank. Aleida worked as his secretary. Hilda worked in the same building which created tension for all of them.

The Catholic Church organized demonstrations against communism and priests began to flee from Cuba. At this time, the CIA also began to plot against Castro.

Che began the industrialization program by using advisers from Chile and Ecuador. Che's people began to administer the factories.



Chapter 23-24

Chapter 23-24 Summary and Analysis

The government gradually gained control over the press as the undesirables were purged. As reforms were implemented, articles written by Che appeared in the press.

The Soviet trade fair was very successful and well attended even though there were some demonstrations. At this time, small planes from the US began attacking Cuban sugar mills and cane fields. Fidel was correct in claiming that they were sponsored by the CIA. The Soviets announced their trade plans with Cuba and delegations arrived from other socialist countries to conduct trade negotiations. The Cubans asked for Soviet economic aid and soon asked for military aid. Full diplomatic relations with Moscow were announced on May 8 and Soviet arms and advisers began entering Cuba in June.

At this time, President Eisenhower authorized the CIA to train a group of Cuban exiles to conduct a guerrilla style war in Cuba. Many middle class Cubans were fleeing the island. This quickly became known in Cuba. When the American oil companies demanded payment, the demand led to seizure of their properties. When the US cut the sugar quotas on July 3, Fidel announced that all American property in Cuba would be seized. The American response was to cancel the sugar purchases, which the Soviets immediately announced that they would purchase.

By Fall of 1960, exiled Cuban guerrillas were appearing in Cuba supplied by CIA airdrops. The rebels were suppressed by the Cubans. The US imposed a trade embargo against Cuba allowing only food and medicine. Castro responded by nationalizing all US companies.

Che visited Khrushchev in Moscow and it was here that he met Mario Monje Molina who was the leader of the Bolivian Communist party. From there he went on a two month tour of the Communist bloc countries. He also visited North Korea and Peking. He was successful in negotiating trade deals for Cuba.

In January 1961, before he left office, Eisenhower severed diplomatic relations with Cuba. Chapter Twenty Four: On February 24, Che began his new position as minister of industries. Moments after leaving his house, the house was riddled by gunfire.

The CIA was still plotting against Cuba and training a group for an invasion with air support. There were also plans to assassinate Fidel, Raul and Che. The new President Kennedy had approved the plans and the landing was to be at the Bay of Pigs. Kennedy would not authorize large scale air support, but the CIA thought he would change his mind. He didn't and the invasion failed. The twelve hundred prisoners were eventually exchanged for sixty-two million in medical supplies.



In 1962, Alexiez was called to Moscow and made Ambassador to Cuba. He would return to Havana with twenty advisers. At the end of May he was told of the Soviet decisions to place nuclear missiles in Cuba. Raul Castro traveled to Moscow to sign the treaty. They were supposed to keep the missiles a secret but they were detected by American reconnaissance flights in September.



Chapter 25-26

Chapter 25-26 Summary and Analysis

In the spring of 1962, Che ran a program to organize guerrilla trainers from Latin American students who were in Cuba on revolutionary scholarships. One of the recruits was Hilda's brother, Ricardo. There was dissent in many countries, both in and out of Latin America and other countries. Che helped some of the different revolutionary groups and sent Alberto Granado to Argentina to develop a revolutionary force there. The group trained in Cuba and Che hoped to join them at some point in the future.

Che led the troops during the Cuban missile crisis. Both Che and Fidel were angry at Khrushchev for settling the crisis. The US wouldn't invade Cuba and pulled their missiles out of Turkey in exchange for the Russian's withdrawing their missiles from Cuba. After the missile crisis, the Argentine who were in training were to establish a base on the Bolivian border with Argentina for an operation called Operacion Sombra or Operation Shadow. They were sent to Czechoslovakia and then to Algiers where they trained.

Che learned of conditions in Argentina by inviting his friends to Cuba and talking to them about Argentina. The group headed by Masetti left Algeria in May, 1963, and entered Argentina on June 21. While there, there were elections in which the military government was ousted and a civilian Dr. Arturo Illia was elected. Even though Argentina was coveted by the Soviets, they felt that Che's actions would bring them into conflict with the United States. The Latin American countries wanted Che controlled. Che and Fidel were beginning to have differences. Castro was interested in Cuba and willing to compromise; Che was more interested in spreading the social revolution. The original group of Argentine guerrillas were either captured or killed. Che was profoundly affected by the loss.

Chapter Twenty Six: Che makes his decision to leave Cuba. He wanted to advance the revolutionary cause but didn't know where. The year was 1964 and he was thirty-six. Che was having differences of opinion with various people over how to design and implement various programs.

Che began to rebuild what had been destroyed with the Masetti operation. He sent Tania to Bolivia and Ciro Bustos to work with various revolutionary groups. Che made his final visit to Moscow in November, 1964, where it was known that he did not agree with their policy of peaceful co-existence. He was critical of other Latin American countries that did not agree with his views. Che was beginning to slowly extricate himself from his duties in Cuba but did appear at the United National in December. From New York, he took a three-month journey to Africa, China and other places, offering Cuban military assistance to some countries. Upon his return to Cuba, he immediately had a long meeting with Fidel, the subject of which has never been revealed.

He used the identify Ramon Benitez when he departed on April 1.



Chapter 27-28

Chapter 27-28 Summary and Analysis

On April 19, using the disguise of Ramon Benitez, Che arrived in Dar-Es-Salaam. Other members of the Cuban brigade would be arriving. Che was one of two white men in the group and was introduced as a guerrilla veteran and a doctor called Tato. The group was on their way to the Congo. Che had made his decision not to return to Cuba and planned on spending the next ten to twenty years fighting. He left letters to his family and books for his friends.

Che's disappearance from Cuba was noted. Fidel would say only that Che was where he could be most useful to the revolution. There were reports of his being in various parts of the world. Moscow thought that there had been a fight between Fidel and Che. Fidel finally told Alexiev that Che was in Africa to organize the revolutionary forces. This information was passed on to Moscow.

Che helped out at the base clinic at the Kabimba headquarters. During the long waiting period, Che learned about the different people involved in the rebel movement and taught classes to prevent apathy. While he was in the rebel camp, he receives news that his mother died. After two months of inactivity, they launched their first attack and it was a disaster. The Congolese commander, Kabila, had been absent for three months. The rebels were always seen at various summits and received a great deal of aid, but they weren't often at the front. Che realized that his time frame of five years for the revolution was very optimistic. He requested more troops and equipment from Fidel. The rebels suffered from a lack of discipline, desertions and a belief in magic not to mention illness. Their camp was destroyed in the government offensive on October 24. This and the end of Tanzania's support ended the Cuban role.

Chapter Twenty Eight opens with Che at the Cuban embassy in Dar-Es-Salaam. The Soviets had flown the other Cubans to Havana. Che was not returning to Cuba, and asked Pombo to stay on with him, along with Carlos "Tuma" Coello and Jose Maria "Papi" Martinez. He had to depend on Cuban security for his safety. Aleida traveled to Tanzania to see him in January, 1966. After she departed, he went to Prague to join Papi, Pombo and Tuma at a safe house. Aleida also visited him there.

The decision was made to go to Bolivia, even though Fidel wanted him to return to Cuba and tried to stall him. In Bolivia, Tania had made important contacts. She married and obtained Bolivian citizenship. Che sent Papi to contact her. Troops for Che's Bolivian actions were trained in Cuba. Many of the men Che selected had served with him earlier and were happy to be with him again. His appearance was altered for his trip to Bolivia.



Chapter 29 - Epilogue

Chapter 29 - Epilogue Summary and Analysis

Che's mistake in Africa was repeated in Bolivia. He arrived to take part in a revolution on foreign soil without being invited. He needed the support of the Bolivians. He could not work out an agreement with Mario Monje, the head of the Bolivian Communist Party. Che relayed this information to Fidel. A deserter captured by the government told the government about a Cuban named Ramon and troops were in the area. The army was looking for them and the rebels attacked the army patrols. The United States was also sent a team of advisers to Bolivia to combat the guerrillas. Some of Che's men, namely Bustos and Debray were taken prisoner, which left Che and his men cut off from Cuba and in virtual isolation. According to the government interrogators, Debray told them that Che was in Bolivia. The Americans were present during the interrogations. The Green Berets and CIA were determined to find Che and keep him from operating in Bolivia.

Felix Rodriguez was given the assignment of hunting Che in June, 1967. He arrived in La Paz on August 1, using the cover of a businessman named Felix Ramos.

Che was weakened by asthma without any medication. Their camps and hideouts were raided. Papi and Tuma were killed. By the end of August, most of his men were gone, and Che tried to reach an urban area where he had a support network. At this point, Che was desperate, and breaking all his own rules. The government had Che and his surviving guerrillas surrounded near La Higuerra. Che is injured and captured and taken to La Higuerra on October 8.

Lt. Colonel Selich arrives and interrogates Che. Felix arrives on October 19. He photographs Che and all the captured documents. Che admitted failure and blamed it on the Bolivian Communists. At 12:30 pm, they received orders to eliminate Che. The orders came from the Bolivian high command. Rodriguez says the United States government wanted Che brought to Panama for questioning. But those who held Che Guevara killed him to make it look like it was done in a gun battle—Che was now dead at the age of thirty nine.

In the Epilogue, Aleida knew Che was having problems in Bolivia. Fidel confirmed the death of Che to the nation on October 15. He visited Aleida and the children everyday. Over one million people attended the national wake for Che, held on October 18 in Havana.

Che's body was brought to Vallegrande where his hands were amputated; his body disappeared as those of other guerrillas were. Three Cubans survived, one of whom is Pombo. He returned to Cuba.

Aleida remarried and her children all remained in Cuba. In July 1977, Che's remains were found in Vallegrande, Bolivia. The remains were sent to Cuba and is now in a mausoleum near Santa Clara.



Characters

Ernesto Che Guevara

Che was born in Rosario, Argentina on May 14, 1928 to Celia and Ernesto Guevara Lynch. At the age of two, he developed asthmatic bronchitis, so the family did not return to their Misiones plantation because of the dampness. The family eventually settled in Cordoba province in Alta Gracia. Che was schooled by his mother until the age of nine. At fourteen, he began high school in Cordoba. He graduated in 1946 and began to work as a soils specialist one hundred fifty miles away in Villa Maria. He quit the job and moved to Buenos Aires to be with his dying grandmother and attend medical school at the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Buenos Aires. Ernesto was an avid traveler when he had time off from school and as soon as he graduated, he traveled around South and Central America. He eventually went to Guatemala after the revolution to try to find a job that would contribute to the revolution. This was the first time he expressed any interest in anything political. He met Hilda Gadea, who became his first wife.

Ernesto traveled to Mexico City after leaving Guatemala. This is where he came into close contact with the Cubans and met the Castros and Soviet agent Nikolai Leonov. He married Hilda Gadea on August 18, 1955 and their daughter Hilda Beatriz was born on February 15, 1956. Several months later, Che departed for Cuba and lived in the mountains of the Sierra Maestra with the rebels. By July, he was promoted to the rank of commandante, the highest rank in the rebel army.

Che became a radical Marxist and refused to deal with the anti-communists in the movement. He had his own men and his own camp as did Raul and Fidel. After the revolution, he was charged with administering revolutionary justice and was made a Cuban citizen under the new constitution. He divorced Hilda and married Aleida. She had a daughter named Aleida, and eventually three other children.

Che helped insurgency groups in the different countries, especially in Latin America. He had a vision that was not just for Cuba but for all of Latin America. His views became more radical, and after eight years in Cuba, he departed on April 1, 1964, using the identity Ramon Benitez. After the failure in Africa, Che would not return to Cuba. After time in Tanzania and Prague, he traveled to Bolivia using the Ramon Benitez identity. He is captured and killed on October 9, 1967.

Felix Rodriquez

Felix Rodriquez was the nephew of Batista's minister of public works. His family had fled Cuba when Castro came to power. The boy had been in military school in Pennsylvania at the time. He was recruited by the CIA in 1960 and trained for an attack on Cuba and received training in a variety of different countries. Rodriquez devised various plans to assassinate Castro but none was carried out. He was in various groups that carried out



guerrilla activities against Cuba. After the failed Bay of Pigs invasion, he received asylum at the Venezuelan Embassy in Havana where he remained for four months until he received safe passage out of the country. He remained active as a CIA agent who worked with the Cuban exile attacks. When he was based at the CIA's Miami station, he was given the job of tracking Che Guevara. He arrived in Bolivia on August 1, 1967 when the CIA learned that Che was in Bolivia. Felix arrived in La Higueira when Che was captured and was there when he was executed. He could not stop the execution. The CIA wanted Che taken to Panama for questioning.

Fidel Castro

Fidel Castro was a lawyer who became a revolutionary. He was the leader of the guerrilla movement in Cuba and dedicated to overthrowing the corrupt Batista regime. Fidel, his brother Raul and others were imprisoned and then granted amnesty in 1955. They went to Mexico City where Fidel invited Ernesto to join their cause.

Castro was born in the Eastern Cuban province of Mayari. His parents were landowners who had nine children. Fidel was educated at the Dolores primary school in Santiago and then sent to boarding school at the Jesuit Colegio Belen high school. He received his law degree from Havana University where he was active in politics. He belonged to the Ortodoxo party and was against the corruption of the ruling political regime. He was also anti-imperialistic. United Fruit basically controlled his home province. Fidel blamed the United States for the poverty and the situation in Cuba and was determined to bring an end to the U.S. domination in Cuba. Fidel was motivated by power and the need to excel. He consolidated his power and control as the revolution proceeded.

Aleida March

Aleida March became the second wife of Che, whom she met in November, 1958. She was a member of the Las Villas rebel underground and twenty-four years of age at the time. Her family had a fifty acre tenant farm in Santa Clara. Aleida had graduated from Santa Clara University with a degree in education and was active in the July 26 Movement. After her home was raided, she moved to Che's guerrilla camp and became his lover. They were married on June 2, 1959 and she worked as his secretary. In 1960, she gave birth to a daughter named Aleida and a second child, a son named in May, 1962. Daughter Celia was born on June 14, 1963 and son Ernesto was born on February 24, 1969. After Che's death, she remarried and remained in Cuba.

Celia de la Serra

Celia is the mother of Che. She came from a blue-blood wealthy Buenos Aires family that was a part of Buenos Aires society. She attended the exclusive Catholic school, Sacre Coeru and married Ernesto Guevara Lynch when she was twenty years old. She was already three months pregnant with Che and had four other children, Celia, Roberto, Ana Marie and Juan Martin. Her inheritance helped support the family and she



home schooled Che until he was nine. She was imprisoned in April, 1963 after returning to Argentina after a visit to Cuba and accused of being an agent. She remained close to Che until her death in 1965.

Raul Castro

Raul Castro is the younger brother of Fidel. He was a member of the Communist Party and had met Nikolai Leonov in Europe in 1953. Raul met the agent in Mexico City and invited him to Maria Antonia's home, where the Cuban community met. Raul avoided arrest in Mexico and sailed to Cuba with the group. While in hiding in the Sierra Maestra, he met Vilna Espin, whom he married. Raul led his column of forces in the revolution and always played a crucial role in the the government. Fidel always made it known that Raul would take over if anything happened to him.

Hilda Gadea

Hilda Gadea is the first wife of Ernesto Che Guevara. She was introduced to him by Ricardo Roho in Guatemala. She worked for the Guatemalan government and was in exile from Peru. Since she knew so many people in government, she tried to help Ernesto secure a job. With her, Ernesto met many leftists from other countries. She married Che on August 18, 1955 and gave birth to Hilda Beatriz on February 15, 1956. When they divorced, she and Hildita moved to Havana where Hilda worked. Hilda died of cancer in 1974.

Tamara Bunke

Tamara Bunke was an Argentine who had been raised in Berlin. She moved to Cuba after the revolution and received training from the security forces. She became known as Tania and was later considered to be a Stasi agent who was sent to Cuba. Che sent her to Bolivia in 1964. She is killed in an army ambush in Bolivia.

Ernesto Guevara Lynch

Ernesto, Che's father, was from a once-wealthy Argentine family. He was twenty-seven years of age when he married Celia. He never really worked and went from unsuccessful scheme to unsuccessful scheme. His liaisons with women placed a strain on his marriage. He remarried after Celia's death and settled in Cuba when the family was targeted in 1976.



Jorge Recardo Masetti

Masetti was an Argentine journalist who first met Che in 1958 when they were in the Sierra. He had a letter of introduction from Ricardo Roho. Masetti was selected by Che to lead a revolutionary group in Argentina trying to evade a patrol.

Ciro Bustos

Ciro Bustos was an artist from Mendoza, Argentina. He arrived in Cuba the day before the Bay of Pigs invasion. Bustos reported to Che and was instrumental in helping revolutionary groups in various countries. He lived in Chile for a while and then returned to Argentina and then moved to Sweden.

Celia Sanchez

Celia Sanchez was a member of the July 26 Movement and instrumental in helping Castro after his arrival in Cuba. She helped them hide, brought them weapons, and helped organize their network. Celia is thirty-seven years of age and lives in Manzanillo, Cuba when she met Che. She became Fidel Castro's closest confidante and lover.

Ricardo Rojo

Ricardo Rojo was an Argentine lawyer who escaped from Argentina, where he was suspected of terrorism. He first met Ernesto in La Paz, Bolivia and met him several times during Che's travels in Central and South America. He returned to Argentina in 1983 and died of cancer in 1996.

Alberto Granalo

Alberto Granalo is a friend of Ernesto's from Cordoba. He and Ernesto spend several months traveling around South America together. Alberto and his family moved to Cuba in 1961. He later moved back to Argentina to help Che establish an insurgency force. He returned to Cuba to live.

Harry Villegas

Harry Villegas, known as Pombo, was twenty-five when he met Che. He was with Che in the Congo and remained with him after the defeat. Pombo met Che in 1957 in the Sierra and survived the Bolivian situation. He returned to military life in Cuba.



Roberto

Roberto is the third Guevara child and the brother of Che. He fled to Cuba in 1976 when the family was targeted. He eventually returned to Argentina.

Juan Martin

Juan Martin is the youngest brother of Che. He fled to Cuba but returned to Argentina and was sent to prison for nine years before being released.

Captain Sanchez Mosquera

The captain was Che's biggest nemesis during the revolution. His troop were tracking and attacking the rebels in the Sierra Maestra.

Celia

Celia is the second born Guevara child and the sister of Che. She moved to London in the 1970s.

Ana Maria

Ana Maria is the fourth Guevara child and a sister of Che.



Objects/Places

Rosario, Argentina

Rosario is the birth place of Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

Buenos Aires

Buenos Aires is the capital of Argentina where the Guevara family returned to live in 1929.

Misiones, Argentina

Mision is the location of the yerba mate plantation that Guevara's father owned. It is located on the Rio Parana about one thousand miles from Buenos Aires.

Alta Gracia

Alta Garcia is a small spa town in Cordoba province where the Guevara family lived for eleven years.

Cordoba

Cordoba is a city in Cordoba province where Che attended high school.

La Paz, Bolivia

La Paz is the capitol of Bolivia. Bolivia is where Che was killed.

Guayazuil, Ecuador

Guayaquil is a city in Ecuador which Ernesto and Carlos visited.

Panama

Panama is a Central American country to which Ernesto and Gualo traveled.



Costa Rica

Costa Rica is a Central American country to which Ernesto and Gualo traveled.

Guatemala

Guatemala is a Central American country that nationalized United Fruit properties after a revolution. Ernesto tried to secure a position in the health ministry there.

Mexico City

Mexico City is the capital of Mexico and where Ernesto went after leaving Guatemala.

Cuba

Cuba is an island in the Caribbean, ninety miles from Florida. It is where Che helped Fidel Castro stage the overthrow of the Batista government. Cuba was known as La Isla to the underground.

Sierra Maestra

The Sierra Maestra is a mountain range in Eastern Cuba where Fidel and the guerrillas hid and established their bases.

Moscow

Moscow is the capitol of the Soviet Union where Che traveled to meet Khrushchev.

The Congo

The Congo is a country in Africa where Che went to help fight the revolution.



Themes

Effect of Environment

One of the themes of the book is the effect of environment on people and how people react to the environment. Che grew up in a comfortable apolitical environment. His family wasn't very interested in politics and his father was always on the sidelines of various events and not a major player. His father went from one failed business venture to another which is what gave Che his desire to succeed. As Che traveled around Latin America, he was exposed to the economic and social effects of imperialism. He looked at the resulting poverty and living conditions of the people and came to hate imperialism and wanted to do something to change those conditions and help people achieve better lives. He found the answers in Marxism and socialism in which he was self-taught. Nobody set out to indoctrinate Che and convert him to Marxism.

The environment in which Che grew up and existed in as he traveled made him the man that he became. The inequities of the life imposed on people by United Fruit and United States imperialism and the oppressive and corrupt political regimes of the time are what Che reacted to. He became a firm hater of the United States because of the imperialism. When Fidel asked him to join the revolution in Cuba, he didn't hesitate. He couldn't find a way to help in Guatemala, but he could help the revolution in Cuba.

Dedication to Ideals

A second theme of the book is dedication to ideals. Che lived according to what he believed, denying himself and those around him the perks of his position. He made it clear that he and his family would live as other people lived without special privileges. For example, when Aleida was given a pair of Italian made shoes, he made her return them because they weren't consistent with the revolution. During food rationing, he demanded that his family have the same rations as other Cubans. After the revolution when he held high positions in government, he would not accept a salary or the perks that were consistent with his positions.

Che was not interested in power or politics. He was interested in combating imperialism and improving living conditions for the people and was cold blooded in what he had to do to make the revolution succeed. His personal life was second to the revolution. When he left Cuba, he knew that he would never return, that he would die fighting for the cause in which he believed. He did what he had to do to advance that cause, even when his views brought him into conflict with other communists.

Leadership

Another theme of the book are the leadership qualities of Che. He was a man that other men followed. One of the reasons for this is that people trusted and respected him. Not



only was he intelligent, people always knew where they stood with him. A strict disciplinarian, he made it clear what the rules were and what he expected of people and what the penalties were for disobedience. Che was right beside the men fighting with them and never asked them to do anything he wouldn't do himself. For this, they respected him.

Che proved himself to be capable, which is why Fidel relied on him so much. He proved himself to be up to any task to which he was assigned. In spite of his asthma, he was fearless in battle conditions. When he was given assignments in the post-revolutionary government, he learned what he had to, whether it was economics, math or whatever, to do the best job that he could. No task was too big for him.

Che developed his own rules for conduct on the battlefield. In Bolivia, he didn't follow his own rules and this is the mistake that led to his capture and death.

The leadership qualities of Che contributed to the mystique of Che Guevara and the success of the Cuban revolution. This is why the United States considered him so dangerous at the time.



Style

Perspective

The book is written in the third person with the narrator being the author. The author provides all the necessary background and details, and there are plenty of them as a result of the author's extensive research. The third person point of view allows the author to do this without any limitations. The author can explain the details of the settings and events as well as other details of the story. The restrictions of the use of the first person point of view are absent since the knowledge of the reader isn't restricted to scenes involving the main character and narrator. The many characters can be introduced and their relationship to the main character and events can be explained easily. This is the best approach to take in a biography which is filled with so many events and details. Anderson does a good job of providing the necessary background on Marxism for the reader to see what it was that Che was reacting to and what his differences with the communist world were. The author took the time to explain the positions of the different people and groups to give the reader a better understanding of what was happening. This is why this book is considered to be the definitive book on Che Guevara. The reader appreciates the author's approach and thoroughness.

Tone

The tone of the book is objective. The author was interested in and curious about Che and set out to learn about the man and his life. Anderson traveled to various countries and conducted a myriad of interviews to obtain information about Che. He spent several years living in Cuba to research the book and all this research is evident in the book he produced.

The author is very objective and doesn't let his own feelings or views enter into his book. Instead of making judgments, he presents the conflicting facts, such as those surrounding Che's death. The reader is left to make up his own mind over who to believe or what is the most plausible explanation. The reader has to appreciate and respect the objectivity of the author. The book is a presentation of the facts not the presentation of a point of view, and the readers are left to draw their own conclusions, which is the way it should be. This is one of the reasons why the book is so interesting. The tone of the book and the style of writing and presentation allow the readers to feel that they are exploring the mystique of Che along with the author. Nothing could be better for the curious reader.

Structure

The book is well-structured into three parts with a total of twenty-nine chapters and an Epilogue. Each part corresponds to a different stage of Che's life. Part One focuses on his youth as Che grew up in a comfortable style in Argentina. It explains how his view



against imperialism and poverty developed as he traveled around Latin America. Part Two deals with the period of the Cuban revolution and Part Three is the post-revolutionary period and his role in it. The reader can see how Che's views developed and better understand why he did the things he did. The Epilogue explains what happened to the different characters after Che's death.

There is an Introduction in which the author explains his purpose for writing the book. There is an Appendix and Notes on Sources sections which provides additional information on people and events as well as a Selected Bibliography. An Index is included, which is helpful if the reader wants to look up information on people or events.

The book also includes two photo sections, which is always appreciated in a book of this kind since it allows the reader to associate names with faces. This makes the characters seem more real for the reader.

The book is full of details and very well organized which is why it is easy to read. The chosen structure is very appropriate for a book of this kind.



Quotes

"If that child had not grown up to become the renowned revolutionary Che, his parents' secret might well have gone with them to their graves. He must be one of the rare public figures of modern times whose birth and death certificates are both falsified. Yet it seems uniquely fitting that Guevara, who spent most of his adult life engaged in clandestine activities and who died as the result of a secret conspiracy, should have begun life with a subterfuge." (Chapter 1, pg. 4)

"The move to Cordoba also coincided with the onset of Ernesto's adolescence. He began increasingly to assert himself, questioning his bickering parents' values and forming the first glimmerings of his own worldview." (Chapter 3, pg. 27)

"Like the medical researcher he was on his way to becoming, Ernesto immediately searched for a cause when he saw a symptom. And, having found what he thought was the cause, he searched for its antidote. Thus, in Ernesto's mind, the dying old lady in Valparaiso and the persecuted miner couple on the road to Chuqui had become 'living examples of the proletariat in the whole world,' who lived in misery because of an unjust social order, and whose lives would not improve until future enlightened governments changed the state of things. Symptom and cause were wrapped up into one ugly package. Standing behind the local regimes holding sway and perpetuating the injustice were the Americans and their overwhelming economic power. Ernesto's antidote in the case of Chile was to 'get the uncomfortable American friend off its back,' but he warned in the same breath of the dangers and difficulties of expropriation. Ernesto didn't have the cure of all these ills, but he was searching. Perhaps the 'red flame dazzling the world' was the answer, but he wasn't yet sure." (Chapter 5, pg. 82)

"To Ernesto, it must have seemed to him an appropriate place to initiate hostilities against the country he had come to see as a mortal enemy. Meanwhile, in his journal, Ernesto began listing and describing the people he met, evaluating them according to their human qualities and, increasingly, for their political 'soundness' as well." (Chapter 8, pg. 118)

"In the end, John Foster Dulles's instincts about the political exiles would prove correct. Besides Ernesto 'Che' Guevara, a host of future revolutionaries had escaped his grasp in Guatemala. In Mexico and elsewhere, they would regroup and, from the ashes of the Arbenz debacle, eventually reemerge - often with Guevara's help - as the Marxist guerrillas who would haunt American policy-makers for the next forty years." (Chapter 9, pg. 159)

"What he had seen in Guatemala had merely added weight to his convictions, he wrote, and at some moment he had begun to believe. 'At which moment I left the path of reason and took on something akin to faith I can't tell you even approximately because the path was very long and with a lot of backward steps.' There it was. If his family hadn't had enough prior warning, Ernesto had now declared himself and described his conversion. He was a Communist." (Chapter 11, pg. 165-166)



"Che, as the Cubans had begun calling him, was to be their doctor. It was the early days - Fidel was a long way from putting together his ambitious scheme - but it was the cause Ernesto had been searching for." (Chapter 12, pg. 175)

"Once, Hilda observed as Ernesto picked up their daughter and told her in a serious voice: 'My dear little daughter, my little Mao, you don't know what a difficult world you're going to have to live in. When you grow up this whole continent, and maybe the whole world, will be fighting against the great enemy, Yankee imperialism. You too will have to fight. I may not be here anymore, but the struggle will inflame the continent.'" (Chapter 13, pg. 202)

"Ernesto Guevara was now at war, trying to create a revolution, the result of a conscious leap of faith. He had crossed a boundary that was invisible to outsiders and had entered a domain where lives could be taken for an ideal and where the end did justify the means." (Chapter 15, pg. 233)

"More than any other documents, those of the epistolary war between Daniel and Che reveal the depth of the ideological divisions within the Cuban rebel movement at the time. Daniel wrote his rebuttal letter to Che before knowing of Fidel's break with the Miami Pack, but the die had already been cast - Cuba's other opposition groups were being informed they could have a role in the Cuban revolution only after acknowledging Fidel as its paramount leader, and on his conditions." (Chapter 17, pg. 245)

"But Che was different, and they knew it. He demanded more of himself, so he demanded more of them, too. Each sanction he meted out came with an explanation, a sermon about the importance of self-sacrifice, personal example, and social conscience. He wanted them to know why they were being punished, and how they could redeem themselves. Naturally, Che's unit was not for everyone. Many fell by the wayside, unable to take the hardship and his rigorous demands, but for those who stuck it out, being 'with Che' became a special source of pride. And because he lived as they did, refusing extra luxuries due to his rank, taking the same risks as they did in battle, he earned their respect and devotion. For these youths, about half of them black, many from poor farming families, Che was their guide and teacher, a role model to emulate and live up to, and in time they wanted to believe whatever he believed in." (Chapter 19, pg. 341)

"Once again, Che invoked the specter of death, now envisioned on a truly massive scale, to extol the beauty he felt in the collective sacrifice for liberation. He spoke with the heart-felt conviction of someone with no doubts about the purity of his cause. His words were a liturgy, used to convert. Che Guevara, aged thirty-two, had become the high priest of international revolution." (Chapter 23, pg. 477)

"Stealthily, Che was setting up the chessboard for his game of continental guerrilla war, the ultimate prize being his homeland." (Chapter 25, pg. 540)

"If all roads in Cuba have been closed to you, for whatever reason, in Algiers there's a Mr. Ben Bella who would appreciate your organizing his economy, or advising him on it;



or a Mr. Nkrumah in Ghana who would welcome the same help. Yes, you'll always be a foreigner. that seems to be your permanent fate." (Chapter 27, pg. 647)

"During one roadside pit stop to eat lunch, Che finally revealed his true identity to Loro, asking him not to reveal his presence to the party until he had spoken with Monje. According to Pombo, 'He told [Loro] his decision to come to Bolivia was because it was the country with the bet conditions for a guerrilla base in the Continent.' He then added: 'I've come to stay, and the only way that I will leave here is dead, or crossing a border, shooting bullets as I go.'" (Chapter 29, pg. 702)

Topics for Discussion

Che did not have any political affiliations or interests during his youth. When did he become aware of the poverty and plight of the masses?

Che spent months traveling around South and Central America. How did this affect him and his political view?

What was the motivating factor for Che's involvement with revolution?

Fidel and Che differed in what motivated their involvement in the revolution. What were these differences since Che was a believer in Communism by this time?

What was Che's vision for Latin America? What did he do to promote his goal?

Why did Che decide to leave Cuba?

Was Che a revolutionary or a terrorist or both? Explain your position.