



Guevara

APOSTLE OF VIOLENCE

By: Pedro Corzo

“I am neither Christ nor a humanitarian, I am the opposite of a Christ”

-Ernesto Guevara

We do not understand how, in a historical era when violence has become something more than detestable, there exist “pacifists” who make apologies for Ernesto Guevara. Guevara was an individual who, independently of doctrines and ideologies, was one of the most consequential theorists of violence as a political practice in one of the most tumultuous stages in America during the XXth century.

He is identified as having one of the most merciless personalities in modern history as noted in a letter he sent from Costa Rica to his aunt Beatriz on December 10, 1953. “In El Paso I had the opportunity to go by the domains of the United Fruit convincing myself once again, of how terrible those capitalist octopi are. I have taken an oath in front of the printed face of the old and bemoaned comrade Stalin not to rest until I see these capitalist octopi annihilated.”

The individual that some seek to present as a just person of deep Christian convictions, wrote a letter to his mother on July 15, 1956 from a Mexican prison, “I am neither Christ nor a humanitarian, I am the opposite of a Christ. I fight for the things in which I believe with all the weapons that I have and I try to leave for dead the other one, so they don’t nail me on any cross or on anything else.”

An example of his violent nature and a certain sadistic disposition are appreciated in a letter he sent his first wife Hilda Gadea, who was in Lima, Peru. He writes on January 28, 1957, “Dear old lady: Here in the Cuban jungle, alive and blood-thirsty, I write these burning lines inspired by Martí. As a real soldier, I am at least dirty and raggedy, I write this letter on a tin plate, with a weapon next to me and something new, a cigarette in my mouth.”

It was not long before he could satiate his thirst. According to Anderson in his book “Che,” several Cuban sources had described how he murdered Eutimio Guerra, an assumed informant. “Che went on to kill Eutimio when it was obvious nobody would take the initiative. This apparently included Fidel, who after giving the order to kill Eutimio, without indicating who was to do it, left to seek shelter from the rain. Jaime Costa, a major in the rebel army, who was an eyewitness, has also described the crime.

The discipline he imposed on his men was unbending and cruel. His lack of sensibility and mercilessness can be appreciated in a story in his book

[*Passages*] in which he proudly describes how he found a dying rebel fighter, who following his orders to get a rifle, went disarmed to the front line, during the confrontation in the city of Santa Clara, because he had punished him by taking away his rifle because he had fallen asleep while standing guard.

His conduct with the military of the old regime was crueler still and he went beyond what any Jacobin could consider fair justice. In Santa Clara he was responsible for the first shootings by firing squad without judgments, and simple accusations could lead the accused to his death.

The Cabaña, his first command post after the victory of the insurrection, was the place where more former military and collaborators of the of the overthrown dictatorship were executed. According to journalist Hart Phillips, from *The New York Times*, some “400 in the first two months”; and testimonies by Tetlon, a journalist with the *London Daily Telegraph* “at times four tribunals worked simultaneously, without pleadings or witnesses, in cases contemplating the death sentence, up to 80 people were charged in collective judgments.” He tells of how he (Guevara) personally ordered, among others, the execution of lieutenant José Castaño Quevedo, whose only crime was occupying the job of director of the Bureau for the Repression of Communist Activities, BRAC, since no claims in the process against the lieutenant had been presented.

It is interesting to note that in 1959, Guevara created a subversive force in Bolivia through the Cuban ambassador in La Paz, José Tabares del Real. This destabilizing effort extended until June 1961 and was carried out against the democratically elected government of a politician of strong revolutionary credentials, Hernán Siles Suaso.

Later, he tried to organize a revolution in Argentina for which he allied himself with Peronist elements. This budding rebellion aborted when Argentinean authorities discovered two guerrilla training schools, and arrested a military Cuban instructor, José Ramón Alejandro. Later on, the authorities in Buenos Aires presented documents that showed that the Cuban Embassy in Buenos Aires was a subversive center directed by Guevara from Havana. Years later, through Jorge Ricardo Masetti, founder of *Prensa Latina*, he organized a guerrilla force identified as the People’s Guerrilla Army, that, according to some analysts incurred the tactical errors that “Che” would repeat, in Bolivia.

Next to Masetti, dead in the Argentinean Chaco (Che would die in the Bolivian Chaco) fell two officials of the Cuban army who had been Guevara's trusted men: Hermes Peña Torre and Raúl Davila.

No doubt Ernesto Guevara possessed a deserved reputation in the theoretical and practical aspects in guerrilla warfare that Castro did not. He was one of the propitiators of the Tricontinental Conference in Havana at the beginning of 1966, which would become, according to their plans, the vector for the Revolutions that would convulse America, Asia and Africa.

His long and frequent trips abroad where he would deliver, incendiary revolutionary speeches, began to turn him into a kind of spokesman for the World Revolution, and his direct contacts with Ben Bella, Gamal Abdel Nasser, Sekou Toure, Joseph Broz "Tito", Ahmed Sukarno and the power elite of the People's Republic of China and Viet Nam increased his prestige as an individual committed to radical political changes.

However, this man who would kill and die for his convictions, exhibited an inexplicable conduct during his youth. He never actively participated against the Fascist and anti-Semitic movements that existed in Argentina, nor did he directly combat Juan Domingo Perón's dictatorship.

In spite of his status as a member of the University Federation in Buenos Aires, an organization directed by socialists and communists, he was not a militant, nor did he write or deliver any speeches where he expressed his opinions about the problems facing his country in those days. In a word, there are no records of any actions he might have taken against the acts of force perpetuated by the government of Juan Domingo Perón.

In January of 1965 Guevara visited the Republic of Congo, Brazzaville, and offered collaboration to Masmaba Debat in the guerrilla forces he was creating in the Kinshasa Congo. Debat accepted, and, upon his return to Cuba, he informed Fidel Castro, who considering it was a way of increasing his political protagonism and the Revolution's hegemony, facilitated the means and resources to step up the already bloody African war. Guevara left with a contingent of 125 Cuban guerrillas, perfectly trained and better armed, all veterans of the insurrection against the regime of Fulgencio Batista .

He arrived in Kinshasa after crossing the Tanganyika Lake, six months later, in December 1965 he returned to Havana with the remainder of his forces disappointed with the Congolese guerrillas. Of all his unsuccessful military actions the less well-known is the one he carried out in the Congo. In this African country he made tactical and strategic errors that he would repeat in Bolivia.

In order to assert his apostleship of violence we reproduce some of the issues he raised:

A) During his presentation at the General Assembly of the United Nations on December 11, 1964, he said:

"We have to state here what is a well-known truth, a truth we have always spoken to the world: yes, we have shot people by the firing squad, we shoot them, and we will continue to shoot them while it is necessary. Our fight is to the death. We know what the result of a lost battle would be, and the worms also have to know this is the result of the battle they have lost today here in Cuba."

B) ["Tactics and Strategies of the Cuban Revolution"] *Revista Verde Olivo* 810-68. Number 3054. "The peaceful road is eliminated and violence is inevitable. In order to achieve socialist regimes there will flow rivers of blood, the road to liberation should be continued even if it means the loss of millions of atomic victims."

C) "Create two, three [...] many Viet Nams[...] that is the password". *Revista Tricontinental*, 16-4-67, organ of the Tricontinental of Solidarity, OSP AAAL. "Hate as a factor in the fight; the uncompromising hate to the enemy, that impels beyond the natural limitations of the human being and turns him into an effective, violent, selective and cold killing machine. Our soldiers have to be so; a people without hate could not triumph over a brutal enemy. It is necessary to take the war to where the enemy takes it: to their homes, to their places of amusement; making it total. It is necessary to prevent him from hav-

ing a minute of peace, a minute of serenity outside his barracks, and even inside them: attack him wherever he is; making him feel like an accosted wild animal everywhere he goes. Then his morale will lower. He will become more beast-like still, but the signs of his decline will be noticed as they appear.

Sources:

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Documents, letters, speeches and essays by Ernesto Guevara.

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