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THE BOLIVIAN DIARY

CONTENTS

Editor's Note vii

Ernesto Che Guevara ix

Maps xii

Preface

by Camilo Guevara 1

A Necessary Introduction

by Fidel Castro 9

THE BOLIVIAN DIARY 33

APPENDICES

Instructions to Urban Cadres 257

Communiqué No. 1 to the Bolivian People 265

Communiqué No. 2 to the Bolivian People 267

Communiqué No. 3 to the Bolivian People 270

Communiqué No. 4 to the Bolivian People 272

Communiqué No. 5 to the Bolivian Miners 274

GLOSSARY 277

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INSTRUCTIONS TO URBAN CADRES₁

Document III

January 22, 1967

A support network of the character we want to create should be guided by a series of norms, which are summarized below.

Activity will be primarily clandestine in nature, but, it will be necessary, at times, to establish contact with certain individuals or organizations, requiring some cadres to surface.

This necessitates a very strict compartmentalization, keeping each area of work quite separate from the other.

Cadres should strictly adhere to the general line of conduct established by our army's general command and transmitted through leadership bodies, while at the same time, they will have full freedom in the practical implementation of this line.

To accomplish the difficult tasks assigned, as well as to ensure survival, cadres functioning underground will need to develop to a high degree the qualities of discipline, secrecy, dissimulation, self-control, and coolness under pressure; moreover, they will need to develop methods of work that will protect them in all eventualities.

All comrades carrying out tasks of a semipublic nature, will operate under the direction of a higher body that will be underground, and which will be responsible for passing on instructions and overseeing their work.

As far as possible, both the leader of the network and those assigned to head up different tasks will have a single function, and contact between different work areas will be made through the head of the network. The following are the minimum areas of responsibility for a network that has already been organized:

The head of the network, under whom are individuals with the following responsibilities:

1. Supplies
2. Transport
3. Information
4. Finances
5. Urban actions
6. Contacts with sympathizers

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As the network develops, someone will need to be in charge of communications, in most cases working directly under the head of the network.

The head of the network will receive instructions from the leadership of the army, and will put these into effect through those in charge of the different work areas. The head of the network should be known only by this small leadership nucleus, to avoid endangering the entire network in the event of their capture. If those in charge of work areas know each other, then their work will also be known to each other, and changes in assignment need not be communicated.

In the event of the arrest of a key member of the network, the head of the network and all those known by the arrested person will take steps to change their residences or methods of contact.

The person in charge of supplies will be responsible for provisioning the army; this task is an organizational one. Starting from the center, secondary support networks will be created, extending all the way to ELN territory. In some cases, this could be organized exclusively through peasants; in other cases, it will include the aid of merchants or other individuals and organizations that offer their assistance.

The person in charge of transport will be responsible for transferring supplies from storage centers to points where the secondary networks will pick them up, or, in some cases, for bringing them directly to the liberated territory. These comrades should carry out their work under a rock solid cover; for example, they can organize small commercial enterprises that will shield them from suspicion by the repressive authorities when the scope and aims of the movement become public.

The person in charge of information will centralize all military and political information received through appropriate contacts. (Contact work is conducted partially in the open, gathering information from sympathizers in the army or government, which makes the task particularly dangerous.) All information gathered will be transmitted to our army's chief of information. The person in charge of information for the network will function under dual lines of authority, being responsible both to the head of the network and to our intelligence service.

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The person in charge of finances should oversee the organization's expenses. It is important for this comrade to have a clear view of the importance of this responsibility, because while it is true that cadres working under conditions of clandestinity are subject to many dangers and run the risk of an obscure and unheralded death, as a result of living in the city they suffer none of the physical hardships that the guerrilla fighter does. It is therefore possible for them to get used to a certain negligence in handling supplies and money that pass through their hands. There is also a risk that their revolutionary firmness will grow lax in the face of constant exposure to sources of temptation. The person in charge of finances must keep account of every last peso spent, preventing a single centavo from being dispensed without just cause. In addition, this person will be responsible for organizing the collection and administration of money from funds or dues.

The person in charge of finances will function directly under the head of the network, but will also audit the latter's expenses. For all these reasons, the person responsible for finances must be extremely steady politically.

The task of the comrade in charge of urban actions extends to all forms of armed action in the cities: elimination of an informer or some notorious torturer or government official; kidnapping of individuals for ransom; sabotage of centers of economic activity in the country, etc. All such actions are to be conducted under the orders of the head of the network. The comrade in charge of urban actions is not to act on their own initiative, except in cases of extreme urgency.

The comrade responsible for sympathizers will have to function in public more than anyone else in the network. This person will be in contact with individuals who are not particularly firm, who clear their consciences by handing over sums of money or extending support while not fully committing themselves. Although these are people who can be worked with, it must never be forgotten that their support will be conditioned by the risks involved. Therefore, it is necessary, over time, to try to convert them into active militants, urging them to make substantial contributions to the movement, not only in money but also in medical supplies, safe houses, information, etc.

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In this type of network some individuals will need to work very closely with each other; for example, the person in charge of transport has an organic connection with the comrade responsible for supplies, who will be his or her immediate superior. The person in charge of sympathizers will work with the head of finances. Those responsible for actions and for information will work in direct contact with the head of the network. The networks will be subject to inspection by cadres, sent directly by our army, who will have no executive function but will simply verify whether instructions and norms are being complied with.

In making contact with the army, the networks should follow the following "route": The high command will give orders to the head of the network, who will be responsible, in turn, for organizing the task in the important cities. Routes will then lead from the cities to the towns, and from there to the villages or peasant houses, which will be the point of contact with our army, the site of the physical delivery of supplies, money, or information. As our army's zone of influence grows, the points of contact will get closer and closer to the cities, and the area of our army's direct control will grow proportionately. This is a long process that will have its ups and downs; and, as in any war like this, its progress will be measured in years.

The central command of the network will be based in the capital; from there other cities will be organized. For the time being, the most important cities for us are: Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Sucre, and Camiri, forming a rectangle surrounding our zone of operations. Those heading up work in these four cities should, as far as possible, be experienced cadres. They will be put in charge of organizations similar to those in the capital, but simplified: supplies and transport will be headed by a single individual; finances and sympathizers by another one; a third person will coordinate urban actions; it is possible to dispense with the assignment of information, as this can be left to the head of the network. The coordination of urban actions will increasingly be linked to our army as its territory grows nearer to the city in question. At a certain point, those involved in urban actions will become semi-urban guerrillas, operating directly under the army's general command.

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At the same time, it is important not to neglect the development of networks in cities that are today outside our field of action. In these places we should seek to win support among the population and prepare ourselves for future actions. Oruro and Potosí are the most important cities in this category. Particular attention must be paid to areas along the borders. Villazón and Tarija are important for making contacts and receiving supplies from Argentina; Santa Cruz is important for Brazil; Huaqui [Guaqui] or some other location along the border with Peru; and some point along the frontier with Chile.

In organizing the supply network, it would be desirable to assign reliable militants who have previously earned a living in activities similar to what we are now asking them to do. For example, the owner of a grocery store could organize supplies or participate in this aspect of the network; the owner of a trucking company could organize transport, etc.

Where this is not possible, the job of developing the apparatus must be done patiently, not rushing things. By doing so we can avoid setting up a forward position that is not sufficiently protected – causing us to lose it, while at the same time putting other ones at risk.

The following shops or enterprises should be organized: grocery stores (La Paz, Cochabamba, Santa Cruz, Camiri); trucking firms (La Paz-Santa Cruz; Santa Cruz-Camiri; La Paz-Sucre; Sucre-Camiri); shoemakers (La Paz, Santa Cruz, Camiri, Cochabamba); clothing shops (the same); machine shops (La Paz, Santa Cruz); and farms (Chapare-Caranavi). The first two will enable us to store and transport supplies without attracting attention, including military equipment. The shoemaking and clothing shops could carry out the twin tasks of making purchases without attracting attention and doing our own manufacturing. The machine shop would do the same with weapons and ammunition, and the farms would serve as bases of support in the eventual relocation of our forces, and would enable those working on the farms to begin carrying out propaganda among the peasants.

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It should be stressed once again that all this requires political firmness and comrades who take from the revolutionary movement only what is strictly essential to their needs, who are ready to devote all their time – as well as their liberty or their lives, if it comes to that. Only in this way can we effectively forge the network necessary to accomplish our ambitious plans: the total liberation of Bolivia.

1. This document was written by Che and given to Loyola Guzmán when she visited the guerrilla camp on January 26, 1967.
2. Established in March 1967 as the National Liberation Army of Bolivia (ELN).

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COMMUNIQUE NO. 1 TO THE BOLIVIAN PEOPLE

Document XVII

Revolutionary Truth against Reactionary Lies

March 27, 1967

The military brutes who have usurped power, after killing workers and laying the groundwork for the total handover of our resources to US imperialism, are now mocking the people with a comic farce. Even as the hour of truth arrived and the masses took up arms, responding to the armed usurpers with armed struggle, they tried to continue with their lies.

On the morning of March 23, troops from the Fourth Division, quartered in Camiri, about 35-strong and led by Major Hernán Plata Ríos, penetrated guerrilla territory along the Ñacahuazú River. The entire group fell into an ambush set up by our forces. As a result of the action, we confiscated 25 weapons of all kinds, including three 60-mm mortars with a supply of shells and other ammunition and equipment. Enemy casualties consisted of seven dead, including a lieutenant, 14 prisoners, five of them wounded in the clash and cared for by our medics to the best of our capabilities. All the prisoners were freed after explaining the aims of our movement.

The list of enemy casualties is as follows:

Dead: Pedro Romero, Rubén Amezaga, Juan Alvarado, Cecilio Márquez, Amador Almasán, Santiago Gallardo, and an army informer and guide whose last name was Vargas.

Prisoners: Major Hernán Plata Ríos, Captain Eugenio Silva, soldiers Edgar Torrico Panoso, Lido Machicado Toledo, Gabriel Durán Escobar, Armando Martínez Sánchez, Felipe Bravo Siles, Juan Ramón Martínez, Leoncio Espinosa Posada, Miguel Rivero, Eleuterio Sánchez, Adalberto Martínez, Eduardo Rivera, and Guido Terceros. The last five were wounded.

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In publicly announcing the first battle of the war, we are establishing what will be our norm: revolutionary truth. Our actions have demonstrated the integrity of our words. We regret the shedding of innocent blood by those who died; but peace cannot be built with mortars and machine guns, as those clowns in braided uniforms would have us believe. They try to portray us as common murderers. But there never has been, and there will not be, a single peasant who has any cause to complain of our treatment or our manner of obtaining supplies, except those who, as traitors to their class, served as guides or informers.

Hostilities have begun. In future communiqués we will set forth our revolutionary positions clearly. Today we make an appeal to workers, peasants, intellectuals, to everyone who feels the time has come to confront violence with violence and rescue a country being sold off in great slabs to Yankee monopolies, and raise the standard of living of our people, who grow hungrier every day.

National Liberation Army of Bolivia

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