More than a Few Good Guerrillas Are Needed to Make Revolution

On October 8, 1967, 20 years ago, Ernesto Guevara, "Ché," was murdered in Bolivia, South America, by direct orders of the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA). Last week we wrote about how Ché's idea of revolution, through a small guerrilla movement of committed and well-trained men and women, was wrong. The lessons from the failure of this guerrilla movement (known as "fiquismo") are important today because although some guerrilla movements, like the NPA in Philippines and the Salvadoran FMLN rely on the masses, they don't fight to destroy capitalism, but rather for a "people's democracy" or some kind of "moderate" capitalism à la Sandinista. At the time Ché's idea of how to make a revolution was deadly wrong, his economic ideas were well ahead of his time as we'll see later.

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

Revisionism Betrayed Ché

The "Communist" Party of Bolivia didn't lend Ché the support he was expecting. Oscar Zamora, head of a Marxist-Leninist group who split from the pro-Soviet "CCCP" of Bolivia, wrote an open letter to Fidel Castro, showing who really betrayed Ché (the letter was reprinted in World Revolution (Jan.-March 1969), a magazine which PLP printed then). The letter's fatal error was to accept the occasion of working with the revisionist party. But you (Fidel) will never be able to deny your direct responsibility for this occurrence since you were the one who convened the revisionist conference with Monje and Castro-Collina (head of the "pro-Soviet" PCP of Bolivia and Argentina respectively)...After the Preparatory Meeting, Ché reestablished relations with the Bolivian and Argentine revisionists and other revisionists in Latin America, despite the opinion Ché had of them. Monje wrote a letter which you also confirm in your 'Necessary Introduction' (to Ché's Bolivian Diary) when you say, 'Ché did not have the least confidence in Monje.'

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

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

Twenty years later, even the Financial Times of London (Oct. 9), confirms this: "Ché was betrayed by the Bolivian Communist Party, which refused to support him (Moscov's hand was seen there by some)."

Build a Mass-Based Communist Movement

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

"...there are those who claim that Marxism-Leninist theory by Ché. He opposes the need for a proletariat party, the cornerstone of Lenin's teaching; makes no conscious fight against bourgeois ideology, revisionism, in the ranks of the movement, thus applying all the theories of the People's War, the idea of creating bases amongst the masses, the Marxist concept that the masses make history; and appears to be totally unaware of the class struggle around him. To the future of the Bolivian people..."

What boils down to is to drive U.S. imperialism from South America by means of elite guerrilla bands in order to achieve the second independence. No theory is being developed on how to achieve that objective. What is happening is that the fight for independence transformed into the role of the working class:

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

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

Who Killed Ché?

Given that the isolation of the masses from Ché's guerrillas, they were easily tracked down in the southern mountains of Bolivia with the help of the CIA and infra-red imaging devices tested in Vietnam. General Gary Prado Salmond, then a captain who commanded the Rangers who tracked down Ché's guerrillas, has written a new book titled The (Continued on next page)

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Jesse Jackson Perpetuate Racism

history of racist ideology and practice. However, there are many instances when multi-racial unity has been quite effective in labor struggles, from coal mines to auto plants to California grape fields. This history offers hope for the success of the shorter work week.

The most dramatic example of multi-racial unity in the U.S. is the campaign Jim Crow and racist hysteria was the 1992 New Orleans strike. Black and white unions united in the battle for a shorter work week despite vicious race-salting. They won, with all unions standing together, despite bribes and threats of all sorts (Wells and Stoddard, 1976).

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

Conclusion

U.S. capitalism today is in decline relative to other imperialist powers, and as a result is inflicting much economic pain on U.S. workers, especially black workers. The economic platform of Jesse Jackson proposed to do little to ease this pain. Instead, it merely proposed ways of making capitalism more efficient through national planning and collaboration of workers with their capitalist owners. The platform adhered to a form of modified capitalism that would tie workers ever more tightly to the government and capitalist class instead of presenting a socialist alternative.

The model of both U.S. and Third World leadership is the same: a social democratic opposition that seeks to re-elect the working class and allow the capitalists to continue their rule.

The list of references and bibliography is included at the end of this issue.
Why Ché’s Guerrillas Failed

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

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

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

Ché’s Advanced Economics

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

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

According to the Financial Times (Oct. 9):

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

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

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

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