



*Che*

# A Man and his Cause

By NICK PITTAS

On October 8, 1967, a revolutionary died. He died at the hands of the oppressors he, so unselfishly, dedicated his life to overthrowing. The man was Ernesto "Che" Guevara.

Che was born in Rosario, Argentina on June 14, 1928. At the age of two he suffered his first attack of asthma (a plight which was to persist and echo from Argentina to the jungles of Bolivia.) Che's parents were well off, his father was a civil engineer, and his mother owned a large farm in Alta Gracia province.

Che did his early schooling at home, because the asthma brought with it a fatigue, and a choking sensation. His mother, Celia, taught him to read and write. Although Che attended elementary school, he did so sporadically. Mostly his brothers and sisters would copy the lessons and assignments, so that Che could do them at home.

### The upper middle class Che

Che began attending high school regularly, in Cordoba. He was a good student, and excelled in mathematics. His toughness manifested itself in his love for sports, for despite his weakness he became an excellent rugby and soccer player.

In 1946, Che graduated from Dean Funes High School, and entered the School of Medicine in Cordoba. Che travelled often to the north and west of Argentina, spurred on by his interests in leprosy and other tropical diseases. Once he went from one extreme to the other by bicycle.

The end of the war was a time of political upheaval in Argentina; Che participated in demonstrations, in youth organizations, and began to find a role for himself on the political scene. At this time Che was in a circle of upper middle class as well as several more or less aristocratic families. According to a friend of Che's "... among the girls who kept company with the Aguilars (family friends of the Guevaras) there were some who came from rich families, and Ernesto (Che) was the sweetheart of one of these girls. In his relations with these girls he was completely unprejudiced, showing no respect for convention and, occasionally scandalizing the girls' parents."

On December 29, 1951, Che and an old high school friend, called Granados, began a tour of South America by motorcycle. Che was driven by a desire to know the continent, its peoples, its ancient civilizations—even if he had to do it on foot. Che and Granados arrived in Santiago, Chile. Later they crossed the Andes on foot. Che wrote afterwards, "This gave us an opportunity to know the people. We worked at odd jobs to earn a few pesos, and then we'd continue on our way. We worked as stevedores, porters, sailors, doctors and dishwashers."

### Che becomes a doctor

From there they travelled to Peru. In the heart of the Peruvian jungle, Che realized an old aspiration; he visited an old leper colony, where the patients had built a dam which changed the course of the river diverting it to Colombia.

Problems confronted them. In Iquitos, they became soccer coaches to earn their plane fare. In Bogota they were deported. A collection made by students permitted them to go to Venezuela, after staying there awhile Che went to Miami aboard a cargo plane filled with thoroughbred horses. Che spent a month there, passing most of his time at the community library, and limiting himself to a diet of coffee laced with milk once a day. From there he returned to Argentina.

By sheer hard work, Che managed to pass 11 of 12 subjects in less than a year. He graduated as a doctor in March 1953, then 25 years old, and already a militant against all forms of tyranny. His extensive travels had shown him the terrible truth about the conditions in Latin America. He left Buenos Aires by train planning to work at the Cabo Banco leper colony in Venezuela. However in Ecuador he was convinced by a friend that Guatemala was the place to see. Che had been arrested in Peru, where his books had been confiscated. In prison he met some Peruvian leftist. At this time Che became aware of the plight of the Latin American Indian, and he wrote several articles on the subject.

### Field Commander for Fidel

Che decided to go and work in Guatemala. In Guatemala he heard stories of one Fidel Castro, and of that man's efforts against the Cuban dictator Batista.

When the U.S. intervention occurred in Guatemala, Che attempted to organize a group of young men like himself in order to confront the United Fruit adventurers. Che has since written, "In Guatemala it was necessary to fight, and almost no one wanted to do it." He escaped to Mexico, when the F.B.I. agents had begun to arrest, and kill those who might become dangerous to the government of the United Fruit company.

In Mexico he met members of the 26th of July Movement, (the day of the attack on the Moncada barracks, in 1953, by Fidel and his men) and became friends with Raul Castro. At that time the movement was planning its invasion of Cuba, and Che became doctor of the expedition. Che's experience had proven to him that only by force would the U. S. imperialists, and their dictator puppets, ever be overthrown.

Late in 1956, the historic Granma landing took place on a desolate beach (Playa de las Coloradas) in Oriente province. Che showed his heroism in action from the very start of the struggle, and soon rose to be top field commander of Fidel's forces. Che led the column that captured Sancti Spiritus and Santa Clara. Despite the attacks of asthma, Che never flinched once from his duties.

Often the revolutionaries had to make long treks in the Sierra Mastres, but Che, though without any medicine, never endangered his men by stopping to rest himself. Besides his duties as a fighter, and a doctor, Che was also the teacher of the group; for he realized that true revolutionaries have to think and plan for the second revolution, namely the socialization of man and his environment.

By January 1959, the revolution had routed, by gaining the allegiance and love of the cruelly exploited Cuban people, a well armed, U. S. backed army. That same month Fidel and Che marched victoriously into Havana. The "little man with the big heart" from Argentina, became a national hero. A deserved tribute to his courage, and his mastery of the logistics of guerrilla warfare.

### Our sacrifice is conscious

Guevara then found himself at the forefront of the struggle for the social reconstruction of a new Cuba. As Minister of Economics he was instrumental in transforming Cuban industry from capitalist anarchy to a stable and humanized socialist economy. Che initiated the literacy campaign, which has since wiped out illiteracy in Cuba. Che played a role in developing the social, and international consciousness of the Cuban people. He championed moral and social incentives rather than material ones. Che's writings and speeches deal with the problems of building a new man in a new world, with the road to liberating man from the hateful, alienating system of capitalism.

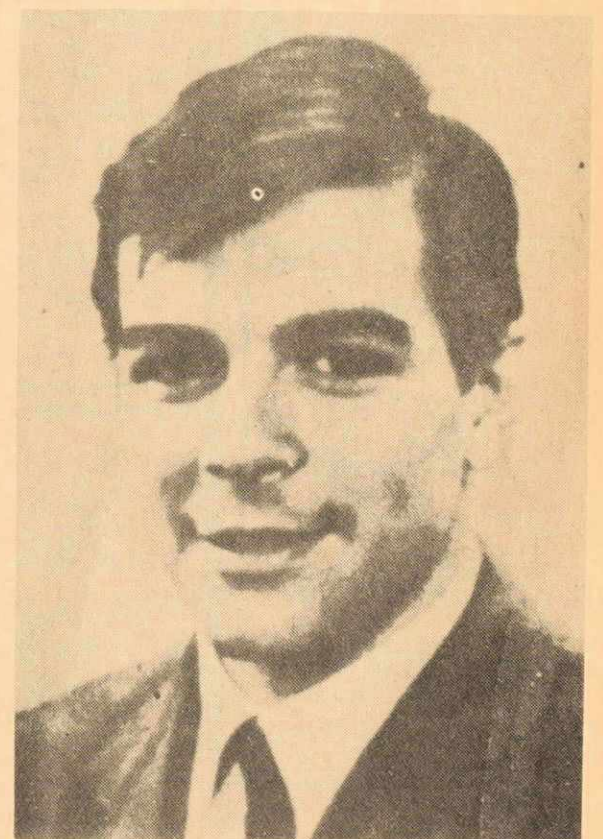
Che, however, believed that the duty of a revolutionary is to make revolution. His beloved Latin America was still struggling to liberate itself from American imperialism, in his eyes he felt that his duty was in other Latin American countries, which were in the throes of their own revolutions. In 1965, Che dropped out of sight. His evocative declarations of solidarity with the peoples of Africa, and Asia were not academic exercises. He had profound feelings of international solidarity in the fight for a socialist world; his commitment was to the oppressed of the entire world. It was for the entire world that he gave his life.

### The duty of a revolutionary is to make revolution

Che once wrote, "Wherever death may surprise us, let it be welcome if our battle cry has reached even one receptive, and another hand reaches out to take up our arms, and other men come forward to join in our funeral dirge with the chattering of machine guns and new calls for battle, and for victory. Death caught up with Che in the jungles of Bolivia. But the gangsters who rule the capitalist world, and their puppets in the 3rd world, can sleep no easier tonight. Che's example shines like a torch, for the oppressed peoples the world over, to pick up.

Che made mistakes, for one he was often too rash, and we can learn from his mistakes as well as his successes. In the struggle for a socialist world many good men have been lost, and more will be lost. The peoples of the world grieve for them, but never despair. As Che once wrote, "Our freedom and its daily maintenance are paid for in blood and sacrifice. Our sacrifice is conscious: an installment payment on the freedom we are building."

VIVA CHE



Che as a revolutionary . . .

. . . and as a student

Your name, our values, the values of the poor and exploited,  
The anathema of the vicious, of that source which creates them.

Your existence, an obsession to all cowards and oppressors,  
An assuredness that we are determined.

Your murder, but another portrait of their desperation,  
The very justification of your life struggle.

Your worth, the obsessed mobilization of the criminal,  
An inspiration for our continuing to the end.

Your struggle, our struggle;

Your perseverance, our perseverance;  
Your example, our steeling;  
Your objective, a real justice.

And your death, Che, the permanence of the justness in that struggle,  
The final abyss of their decadence,  
The inevitability of our triumph,  
Of which you may be certain.

