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The Life of Che Guevara: A Series of FailuresFailure To Find Himself

Although Che Guevara early adopted Marxism as his philosophy, and became a self-styled Marxist theoretician, his background gives no indication of what his motivation might have been. Although he saw and was infuriated by the conditions of poverty throughout South America, he himself came from an upper class Argentine family which at one time had considerable wealth and conservative ties. He apparently had a happy and normal childhood and adolescence, if in a somewhat unconventional and happy-go-lucky household. Although he earned a degree in medicine in 1953 from the University of Buenos Aires, he resented time spent in schooling and interpreted his studies to travel. He never seriously embarked on a medical career. Rather, his primary interest was in travel, when he lived by his wits and had no apparent goal for the future.

Failure in Guatemala

Shortly after his graduation, he started on a trip north through the continent, with Venezuela as his ultimate destination. There he planned to work in a leper colony, having had experience in this work in Bolivia the year before. He never got to Venezuela, for after working his way through Bolivia, Peru and Colombia, he eventually turned up in Guatemala. There he became involved for a time in the 1954 civil war where he tried to organize workers into a resistance movement. He was persuaded to give this up, however, when the Argentine Embassy learned of an insurgents' conspiracy against his life. He took refuge in the Embassy and then travelled on a safe-conduct to Mexico, where he met the Castro brothers.

Che's Role in Castro's Seizure of Power

In 1956 he arrived in Cuba where he joined the 26 July Movement and became a close friend and right-hand man of Fidel Castro. With the success of the uprising, Guevara emerged as one of the leading guerrilla heroes. Unlike the later and disastrous Bolivian campaign, the Cuban operation succeeded mainly because of the complete opposition of the people, rich and poor alike, to the Batista regime. Not only did the local populace aid the insurrectionists in obtaining arms, food, transportation and safe havens, but they also supplied the rebels with the military intelligence they needed to effectively fight the Batista forces. Without this the revolution would have failed, and Castro, Guevara and their rebel-comrades would have met their end. Instead, Guevara was able to establish a reputation as a bold and effective guerrilla leader, who recklessly and unhesitantly cut down his opponents. (It has been noted that even as a youth, Guevara was intrigued by the question of violence as a means to an end, and maintained that no fight was worthwhile unless it were a fight to the death. Likewise, he reportedly had only scorn for the Christian concept of rejecting violence.)

Failure in Cuba

It is said that, following his seizure of power, when Castro was assigning the top government positions to his guerrilla leaders, he asked, "Who is an economist?", whereupon Che raised a finger and Castro promptly designated him President of the Bank of Cuba, a position he held for two years. As the Minister of Industries from 1961-1964 he pushed strongly for the industrialization of Cuba, even though most of Cuban foreign trade came from the sale of sugar. This was one of several such schemes which

Cuban economy to near disaster, from which it never fully recovered, and provoked sharp criticism from Soviet advisers and old-line Marxist economists. By late 1964, following dismissal from his post, Che's relations with Castro deteriorated, his popularity among the Cuban people had considerably diminished, and his repeated calls for exporting the revolution to the underdeveloped countries throughout the world further strained Soviet-Cuban relations. It thus became increasingly evident there was no longer a real place for him in the Cuban hierarchy and he was virtually expelled from the island.

Failure in Africa

It was during a three-month trip to Africa in late 1964 and early 1965 that he made his plans to return there to wage the "struggle against colonialism, imperialism and neo-colonialism." He chose the Congo for his area of operation, but this venture, for which Castro had secretly supplied him with men and equipment, also ended in failure. In fact, Che gave up in disgust when he found he could not mold the Congolese rebels into effective guerrilla fighters and thereby bring the rebellion to a successful conclusion.

Failure in Bolivia

Following his return to Cuba in 1965, Che allegedly made detailed preparations for the disastrous and final adventure in Bolivia, and in early 1966 sent in the first two guerrillas to lay the groundwork. It is now clear that, if not before, from the time Guevara himself arrived at the Bolivian guerrilla encampment in November 1966 until his futile death in October 1967, disaster was inevitable. Not only were Che's efforts to organize and increase his guerrilla band stymied at the outset by the pro-Soviet Bolivian Communists, but support from Castro, never sufficient to begin with, gradually diminished to the point where even contact between Havana and Che's group ceased entirely. This of course raises the whole issue of whether Castro deliberately betrayed Guevara. Likewise, the presence in the group of the female guerrilla, "Tania," recently revealed as an East German-Soviet agent, and the inexcusable blunders she made for one of her experience and skill, raises the question of whether her errors were, in fact, deliberate betrayal.

Over and above these questions, however, remain the guerrillas' methods of operation, which time and again violated Che's own precepts for waging guerrilla war: Che's diary reflects his disappointment and concern at the lack of recruits for his guerrilla band. The maximum number of guerrillas apparently never exceeded fifty-one, and of these almost half were foreigners, mainly top-ranking Cuban revolutionary officials. The first encounter with the Bolivian Army was a victory for the guerrillas but, as it became evident, premature, for it left them little time to plan their operations. Furthermore, they lacked any basic knowledge of either the terrain in which they operated or of the movements of the Bolivian Army. When they had a military advantage, they either lost it or did not press it; Che seemed to have little overall concept of his objectives or the ability to plan a military campaign. Contrary to its expectations, the group was unable to gain the support of a single peasant; in fact, the peasants, fearful and suspicious, became informers against the band. Finally, in the words of one reviewer, the Guevara diary is an "unrelenting chronicle of the grubby, fear-haunted existence" of Che and his band, whose problems were further compounded by hunger, thirst, exhaustion, disease, desertions and, in the end, death.

Conclusion

Guevara's failures in the Congo and Bolivia, and also the failure of a short-lived guerrilla movement he reportedly organized in northern Argentina in 1964 (which is revealed in a book, My Friend, Che, by Ricardo Rojo, published August 30th), were not merely personal failures, but also refute the doctrines, shared by Castro and Debray that:

- Latin America is "ripe for revolution," and that Bolivia is the natural center a continent-wide "second Vietnam;
- that guerrilla action must be rural, not dependent on the cities;
- and that Communist party support is unnecessary and may even be undesirable.

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La vida del "Che" Guevara: Serie de fracasosFracaso consigo mismo

El "Che" Guevara en sus primeros años adoptó el marxismo como filosofía y se autodesignó teórico marxista--no obstante lo cual su historial en nada indica lo que puede haber sido su móvil. Observó y se enfureció con las condiciones de pobreza en toda la América del Sur; él mismo, sin embargo, fue hijo de familia argentina de la clase alta que una vez poseyó bastantes riquezas y vínculos entre los conservadores. Parece haber gozado de felices y normales años de niñez y adolescencia, aunque en un hogar algo fuera de lo común y despreocupado. Se hizo de un grado en medicina en la Universidad de Buenos Aires en 1953; no obstante, le molestaba dedicar su tiempo a los estudios, los cuales interrumpió para viajar. Nunca se dedicó seriamente a la práctica de la medicina. Su interés primordial era más bien viajar, viviendo de sus mañas y sin meta aparente para el futuro.

Fracaso en Guatemala

Poco después de su graduación partió de viaje por el continente, dirigiéndose hacia el norte con destino a Venezuela. Allí se proponía trabajar en una colonia de leprosos, habiendo adquirido experiencia en dicho trabajo en Bolivia el año anterior. No consiguió llegar a Venezuela, ya que después de pasar gradualmente por Bolivia, Perú y Colombia apareció por fin en Guatemala. Allí por algún tiempo se vio envuelto en la guerra de 1954, en la cual trató de organizar un movimiento de resistencia de los trabajadores. Sin embargo, se le hizo abandonar la idea cuando la embajada argentina se enteró de una conjura de los insurgentes contra su vida. Se refugió en la embajada y luego viajó con salvoconducto a México, donde conoció a los hermanos Castro.

El papel del "Che" en la toma del Poder

En 1956 llegó a Cuba, uniéndose al Movimiento 26 de julio y haciéndose íntimo e indispensable de Fidel Castro. Al triunfar la rebelión resultó Guevara ser uno de los principales héroes guerrilleros. Al contrario de la desastrosa campaña en Bolivia más tarde, la operación cubana tuvo éxito principalmente debido a la completa oposición del pueblo pobre y rico contra el régimen batistiano. La población local no sólo ayudó a los insurrectos a obtener armas, víveres, transportes y lugares seguros sino que les suministró la información militar necesaria para combatir eficazmente a la fuerzas batistianas. Sin esas cosas la revolución hubiera sido un fracaso, y Castro, Guevara y sus compañeros rebeldes hubieran perecido. Por el contrario, Guevara consiguió hacerse de reputación como jefe guerrillero arriesgado y eficaz que derribaba a sus contrincantes con temeridad y sin titubeos. (Se ha hecho observar que hasta en su juventud a Guevara le interesaba la cuestión de la violencia como medio de conseguir objetivos y sostenía que ninguna lucha vale la pena a no ser una pelea a muerte. De igual manera según se informa tenía solamente desprecio por el concepto cristiano del rechazo a la violencia.)

Fracaso en Cuba

Se dice que, a raíz de la toma del Poder, cuando Castro repartía los cargos principales de gobierno entre sus líderes guerrilleros, preguntó quién era economista, ante lo cual el "Che" levantó el dedo y Castro de inmediato lo nombró presidente del Banco de Cuba, cargo que ocupó dos años. Como ministro de Industrias de 1961 a 1964 impulsó mucho la industrialización de Cuba, no obstante ser el azúcar el casi exclusivo artículo cubano de exportación. Este fue uno de varios planes parecidos que llevaron la economía de Cuba al borde del desastre, sin que nunca se haya recobrado por completo y mereciendo fuertes críticas de los asesores soviéticos y economistas marxistas de la vieja escuela. Para fines de 1964, luego de su destitución del cargo, las relaciones del "Che" con Castro cayeron en deterioro, su popularidad entre el pueblo de Cuba había disminuido bastante y sus repetidas exigencias de que se exportara la revolución a los países subdesarrollados de todo el mundo contribuyeron a empeorar aun más las relaciones entre la Unión Soviética y Cuba. Así se fue haciendo más y más claro que para él ya no había verdadero lugar en la jerarquía de Cuba y fue virtualmente expulsado de la isla.

Fracaso en Africa

Fue durante un viaje de tres meses a Africa a fines de 1964 y principios de 1965 que hizo sus planes de regresar allí para hacer la "lucha contra el colonialismo, el imperialismo y el neocolonialismo." Escogió al Congo como su zona de operaciones, pero la aventura, para la cual Fidel secretamente le había suministrado hombres y equipo, también culminó en el fracaso. Es más, el "Che" la abandonó con desagrado cuando descubrió que le era imposible moldear a los rebeldes congoleños en guerrilleros eficaces y así llevar la rebelión al éxito.

Fracaso en Bolivia

Después de su regreso a Cuba a fines de 1965, se dice que el "Che" hizo preparativos detallados para su aventura final y desastrosa en Bolivia, y que a principios de 1966 envió a los primeros dos guerrilleros a preparar el terreno. Ahora es evidente que, si no antes, desde el momento mismo en que el propio Guevara llegó al campamento guerrillero en Bolivia en noviembre de 1966 hasta su fútil muerte en octubre de 1967, el desastre fue inevitable. No solamente fueron los esfuerzos del "Che" de organizar y ensanchar su guerrilla frustrados desde el principio por los comunistas bolivianos prosoviéticos sino que el apoyo de Castro, que nunca fue suficiente, disminuyó gradualmente hasta que el contacto entre La Habana y el grupo del "Che" cesó por completo. Esto por supuesto trae a colación la cuestión de si Castro intencionalmente traicionó a Guevara. También, la presencia en el grupo de la guerrillera "Tania," a quien se reveló hace poco como agente de los germanoorientales y soviéticos, y los disparates imperdonables cometidos por ella en vista de su experiencia y pericia, suscitan el interrogante de si en honor a la verdad sus errores no fueron traición intencional.

Por encima de estas cuestiones, sin embargo, permanecen los métodos de operación de los guerrilleros, que en repetidas ocasiones contravenían los preceptos del propio "Che" en la conducta de la guerra de guerrillas: el diario mismo del "Che" refleja su desengaño y preocupación por la falta de reclutas para su guerrilla. El total máximo del bando parece que nunca pasó de 51, y de éstos casi la mitad eran extranjeros, principalmente funcionarios revolucionarios cubanos de alto grado. El primer encuentro con el Ejército de Bolivia fue un triunfo para la guerrilla, pero prematuro, como se vio luego, ya que les dejó poco tiempo para planear sus operaciones. Además carecían de todo conocimiento básico del terreno en que operaban o de los movimientos del Ejército boliviano. Cuando tenían alguna ventaja militar, o la perdían o no la aprovechaban. El "Che" parecía tener poca idea general de sus objetivos o la habilidad para planear una campaña militar. Al contrario de lo que se esperaba no consiguió el apoyo de un campesino siquiera; es más, los campesinos, temerosos y suspicaces, chivataban a la guerrilla. Finalmente, según expresa un comentarista, el diario de Guevara es "crónica inexorable de la existencia roñosa y amedrentada" del "Che" y su bando, cuyos problemas se complicaron aun más con el hambre, la sed, el agotamiento, la enfermedad, las deserciones y por fin la muerte.

Conclusión

Los fracasos del "Che" en el Congo y Bolivia, y también el fracaso del breve movimiento guerrillero que según informes organizó en el norte argentino en 1964 (dado a conocer en el libro "Mi amigo Che," de Ricardo Rojo, publicado el 30 de agosto), no fueron sencillamente fracasos personales sino que también refutan las doctrinas compartidas por Castro y Debray de que:

-- América Latina está madura para la revolución y Bolivia es el centro natural de un "segundo Vietnam" continental;

-- la acción guerrillera deberá ser rural, no dependiente de las ciudades; y

-- el respaldo del Partido Comunista es innecesario y puede hasta resultar indeseable.

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Che Guevara: The Myth of the Man and the Reality of the Failure

The publication of the Dairy of Che Guevara reveals certain fundamental errors that were not so clearly perceived before the dairy was made public. It is plainly noted that Guevara made mistakes that he himself warns must not be made and violated principles that, according to him, are basic.

In his well known manual, "Guerrilla Warfare," he says that when a government has attained power through some form of popular consent, fraudulent or not, and maintains a system of apparent constitutional legality, it is impossible to create favorable guerrilla conditions. In Bolivia a constitutional government has existed since the elections of 1966.

In another part of his manual, he asserts that the guerrilla is an agrarian revolutionary that interprets the wishes of the great rural masses to own the land, the means of production, etc. What, then, was Che Guevara doing in Bolivia if, in his work, he had categorized Bolivian agrarian reform as one of the three great American reform movements?

The sadly famous guerrilla also said that the "sine qua non" for the guerrilla is the support of the people, but he never had it in Bolivia, a fact that he recognized February 10, 1967, scarcely four months after the campaign started, when he noted in his diary: "The peasant is typical, but is incapable of helping us."

In his manual Guevara teaches that "At the outset, it is essential that the guerrilla not allow himself to be destroyed." But reality has shown that before Che's guerrilla band started fighting in the Bolivian hinterland, the police had already identified his ranch-base, as he says in his diary of January 19th.

But the fact that stands out more clearly is the open conflict between Guevara, Fidel's followers and the Bolivian Communists. Che entered Bolivia and began his campaign when the leading Bolivian Communist was in Bulgaria. When he returned, they were never able to agree, which was translated into an absolute lack of support by the Bolivian Communists for the guerrillas. Guevara had always insisted on the need to count on such support, which he was not able to benefit from because of the deep-seated conflict and division between the two leaders.

Fidel Castro himself did not forgive this attitude, and in the introduction that he wrote to the Guevara diary, he harshly criticizes the so-called "traditional parties." This conflict between Castro and the older Communist parties continues as strongly now as before.

There is no doubt that Che Guevara roundly failed. His diary is full of tales of errors great and small, some that he himself recognized

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and others evident to the reader that the ill-fated guerrilla never recognized.

Who knows what would have been the result if the Bolivian Communists had been in agreement with Che? Perhaps the same, because the Bolivian Reds did not accept the concept of guerrilla warfare, undertaken with their participation, in their own country.

Guevara persisted and died, thus adding to various other Cuban failures. The reading of his diary gives an opportunity to study the details of this great failure and to learn why it happened.

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Che Guevara: El mito del hombre y la realidad del fracaso

La publicación del "Diario del Che Guevara" revela ciertos errores fundamentales que no se conocían tan claramente antes de que se hiciera público tal diario. Se nota a simple vista, que Guevara cometió errores que él mismo advierte que no deben cometerse y viola principios que según él, son básicos.

En su conocido manual "Guerra de Guerrillas", dice que donde un gobierno haya subido al poder por alguna forma de consulta popular, fraudulenta o no, y mantenga un sistema de aparente legalidad constitucional, el brote guerrillero está imposibilitado de producirse. En Bolivia existe un régimen constitucional derivado de las elecciones de 1966.

En otra parte de su manual, afirma que el guerrillero es un revolucionario agrario que interpreta los deseos de la gran masa campesina, de ser dueña de la tierra, de sus medios de producción, etc. ¿Qué fue entonces a hacer en Bolivia el Che Guevara, si en su obra había calificado a la reforma agraria boliviana como una de las tres grandes de América?

Dijo también el tristemente célebre guerrillero que es "sine qua non" que la guerrilla cuente con el apoyo del pueblo, pero esto nunca lo tuvo él en Bolivia, hecho que reconoció el 10 de febrero de 1967, apenas a los cuatro meses de iniciada la campaña, cuando anotó en su diario: "El campesino está dentro del tipo, pero es incapaz de ayudarnos".

Enseña Guevara en su manual que "En el primer momento, lo esencial para el guerrillero es no dejarse destruir". Pero la realidad ha demostrado que antes de que la guerrilla del Che entrara en combate en las selvas bolivianas, la policía ya había allanado su

base-finca, como lo dice en su diario el 19 de enero.

Pero el hecho que más se destaca es el conflicto abierto entre Guevara, los fidelistas y los comunistas bolivianos. El Che entró a Bolivia e inició su campaña cuando el máximo dirigente comunista boliviano estaba en Bulgaria. Cuando éste regresó, nunca se pusieron de acuerdo, lo que se tradujo en una falta absoluta de apoyo para las guerrillas, por parte de los comunistas de Bolivia. Guevara siempre había insistido en la necesidad de contar con tal apoyo, que no se logró por el conflicto planteado y la honda división entre ambos líderes.

El mismo Fidel Castro no le perdonó esta actitud y en el prólogo que le hiciera al diario de Guevara, critica duramente los llamados "partidos tradicionales". Esta pugna entre Castro y los más antiguos partidos comunistas, continúa tan fuerte ahora como antes.

Lo cierto es que el Che Guevara fracasó rotundamente. Su diario está lleno de relatos de errores mayores y menores, algunos que él mismo reconoció y otros que son evidentes para el lector, que el fracasado guerrillero no llegó a reconocer.

Quién sabe cuál habría sido el resultado si los comunistas bolivianos se hubieran puesto de acuerdo con el Che. Quizá el mismo, porque los bolivianos rojos no creyeron aceptable el concepto de una guerra de guerrillas, realizada con su participación, en su propia patria.

Guevara insistió y murió, sumándose a los otros varios fracasos cubanos. La lectura de su diario da una oportunidad de estudiar los detalles de este magno fracaso y determinar por qué ocurrieron.

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Excerpts from the Introduction of the Daniel James Diary

Why did Che fail in Bolivia?

The simplest explanation is that he did not follow his own theory of guerrilla warfare, either on the military or the political levels.

The first and most fundamental mistake he made was the selection of Bolivia. On the surface it seemed to be most logical site for the *foco insurreccional*; in actuality, it was the least logical.

The National Revolution had radically transformed the life of the Bolivian Indian, who constitutes more than two-thirds of the country's 4,250,000 inhabitants, and that was probably its greatest single accomplishment. It had done so, first, through an agrarian reform law enacted in 1953, which made landholders of the hitherto virtually landless Indian peasantry and gave them pride of ownership, even if it was but a little plot they were given. Second, the whole body of revolutionary legislation had the effect of raising the Indian out of age-old serfdom and enabling him to exert his rights as a citizen. Before 1952, the Indian had always been considered and treated as a chattel. Now he did not have to stand aside to let the *patrón* pass first, or let the *patrón* sample his daughter before marriage, or let himself be subjected to countless other indignities and abuses.

Guerrilla war, according to Ché, is a war of the people, and the guerrilla is essentially an "agrarian revolutionary." The particular region Ché selected for his base of operations, the southeast, was precisely the one where "agrarian revolutionaries" were least needed. The peasants there had, as a rule, far more land than they could hope to work even with the help of their children. And any peasant, anywhere in Bolivia, who happened to have no land and wanted some, could have it for the asking in the southeast. What, then, could Ché offer the local peasantry? Still more land they could not use?

The revolution of 1952 is called the *National Revolution*. Fragmented during most of its history, Bolivia in modern times has been a nation largely in name; the Revolution sought to correct that weakness. By the time Ché started his *foco*, the "nationalizing" process was far from completed, but it was well enough along to have penetrated important groups in society and to have given them a stake in *la patria*.

It may seem curious to those with prefabricated theories of nations and classes to learn that, in Bolivia, the leading nationalistic force is the great peasant majority. When word got around that there were indeed foreign guerrillas operating in the southeast, and that they had torn this and that Army unit to shreds—this was in the early days—peasant organizations throughout the country held meetings at which they not only denounced the invaders but proceeded to organize armed peasant detachments to send into battle against them.

In July 1967 the Fourth Peasant National Congress was held, representing the vast majority of Bolivian peasants. It called upon its followers to back the government against the guerrillas with arms if necessary. This was supplemented by a formal "Pacto Campesino-Militar," an alliance of the peasantry with the Armed Forces, which itself is made up almost entirely of peasant conscripts.

Ché was faced, then, not with a peasantry that was merely passive and apathetic to his appeals but one that actively opposed him, at least insofar as its organized expression was concerned.

Furthermore, Ché found that in the southeast he and his guerrillas, including even the Bolivians amongst them, were regarded as intruders. If the peasants there were not very conscious of a sense of nationality, they expressed the much narrower attitude of regional parochialism.

When Ché and his men would walk into some populated place (the majority of "towns" and "villages" in the southeast can scarcely be called more than "places"), or in the Spanish word, mere *poblados*, they would usually be greeted with a combination of surprise and fear because they looked like nothing anybody there had ever seen before.

Their physical appearance alone, even before they opened their mouths, aroused suspicion. Dressed in dirty jungle fatigues, carrying field packs and fearful-looking firearms, wearing beards and long hair, they might well have seemed like an invading force from another planet. It must be kept in mind that the Indians are not hirsute, that the faces of their men are practically hairless, and beards are something they seldom see. Nor did the Indians have ethnic features in common with most of the guerrillas, few of whom were of the "Andean Indian" type who generally has an epicanthic eyefold, high cheekbones, deep brown skin (in the south), and short stature.

When the guerrillas opened their mouths to speak, it was not often that the southeastern peasant understood a word they said. Ché had instituted classes in Quechua, Bolivia's dominant Indian language, when he arrived in Nancahuazú, hoping to become able to communicate with the largest single peasant grouping. But—and this is typical of the guerrillas' generally inadequate preparation for their task—the spoken tongue of the region was Guaraní. Not one of the guerrillas, including the Bolivians, could speak it. As Ché remarked upon entering the village of Espino, they encountered a problem finding someone who could speak some Spanish.

Ché often complained that the peasants informed on him to the Army. Why the Army? There were several reasons for this. One was the ingrained fear and respect for established authority and power which has been beaten into the Indian since time immemorial. But also there was now a sense of identification between peasant and Army which had not existed before the Revolution of 1952. Literally an army of peasants, it was made up of youths, many of them born since 1952, who shared the country's generally revolutionary outlook. When a peasant told a soldier or officer where he had spotted the guerrillas, he was talking to his own kind, and in some cases, to a recruit from the same or a neighboring region.

On the purely political level, Ché violated another of his own guerrilla precepts in going into a country which had some form of popular government. As he writes at the very beginning of his manual on *Guerrilla Warfare*:

popular consent, fraudulent or not, and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality. It is impossible to produce a guerrilla outbreak because all the possibilities of civic struggle have not been exhausted." 6

The Barrientos government was a perfect example of what Ché was talking about. He felt Barrientos was "fraudulently" elected, but there could be no doubt that there had been an election on July 6, 1966 and that Barrientos had come to power "through some form of popular consent." Nor that he governed with "at least an appearance of constitutional legality."

With the peasants, the Armed Forces and a recently elected and fairly popular government all arrayed against him, Ché's only hope of getting his *foco* off the ground was to enlist some measure of serious support among the miners, students, and Communists. Had he been able to attract only a few hundred from all three elements combined, that would have given him several times larger a group of guerrillas than he had. He failed, however, to enlist their support, as much because he did not follow the right tactics as for more objective reasons.

June 1967 saw a major national crisis when the tin mines were struck. On June 24th, the Army was forced to occupy them, a bloody clash with the mineworkers ensued, and students, teachers and others in the cities organized big demonstrations in sympathy with them. Any spark might have touched off a national upheaval. Bolivian leaders and U.S. officials feared most of all that the miners, a militant crowd in possession of many arms, and the guerrillas would effect a juncture.

Sympathy for the guerrillas existed among both the miners and the students, who also have a militant tradition in Bolivia. They declared certain mines and schools "territorios libres"—"free territories"—in the Castro manner. Yet, and this was one of the strangest events of the guerrilla war, not a single miner or student sneaked off to Nancahuazú to join Ché.

Why they didn't is a long story, which I have discussed elsewhere. Suffice it to say that Ché had never been able to establish a serious and effective contact with either the miners or the students. In dealing with the miners, he relied upon the rather ineffectual Moisés Guevara, who, as we shall see in the diaries, supplied Ché with a handful of guerrillas so poor on every level that he called them "resacas"—"dregs." All but two, M. Guevara and the one called Willy, deserted or performed badly.

As for the students, Ché did not have even a Moisés Guevara to do proselytizing work among them. Though they shouted loud "viva Ché's!" after the guerrilla chieftain was dead, they gave him the cold shoulder when he was alive and could have used their help.

The baffling story of Ché's relations with the Bolivian Communists of all shades is also too long to relate here, and forms part of another book, but enough should be put on record now to make our present volume as complete and informative as possible.

Fidel Castro has bitterly indicted the Bolivian Communist Party for having failed Ché, and he is right. But the PCB is far from being the sole guilty party. Castro himself bears a large part of the blame for Ché's defeat.

Pombo indicates that the decision to establish the *foco* in Bolivia was a unilateral one taken by Fidel and Ché, perhaps too

6. Pp. 27-8.

7. See Daniel James, *Ché Guevara*, Harvards, 1968.

was one of Mario Monje's chief complaints, and was continually at the bottom of his refusal to yield supreme authority over the "liberation movement" to Ché. Ché was, after all, a foreigner. Though Monje was no great Bolivian patriot, he was enough of a nationalist—and egotist—to feel slighted at the fact that foreigners had decided to make his country a crucible of revolution without his knowledge or consent, and the further fact that they had pre-empted the leadership of it.

At a meeting Ché's agents in La Paz had with Monje, as reported by Pombo on September 28, 1966, the PCB chief made it clear "that this commitment to Leche [Castro] was to organize the matter of the south," meaning the Southern Cone countries, and "that the strategic plan gave secondary importance to the matter of Bolivia." Monje added "that the organization and direction of the [Bolivian plan] was his responsibility." Pombo further paraphrases Monje:

"He believed he was fulfilling his part of the agreement and that there had been meddling in the affair on our part."

The La Paz Cubans resented Monje's attitude and reminded him, in Pombo's words, that "two months back we informed Comrade Estanislao that the plans for the south today secondary and that the headquarters was here because it was thought that this country, at the moment, was the one that had the best conditions (he agreed with this)."

It was probably true, as Pombo reports, that Monje had been told two months earlier—that is, in July—of Havana's decision to begin the continental revolution in Bolivia instead of elsewhere. But why wasn't he informed of the decision at the moment it was made, which was well before July? And why, more importantly, wasn't the Bolivian Communist Party included in the discussions concerning the fate of its own country?

By ignoring the Bolivian Communist Party during the decision-making phase, Fidel could blame no one but himself if the PCB refused to become involved in the guerrilla phase, when he and Ché intended to use it only to provide them with combatants and other means of material support.

That was not the only reason the PCB dragged its feet. Fundamentally, it did not subscribe to Ché's *foco* theory. It saw revolution in more orthodox Leninist terms, as emerging from a mass uprising in the cities. This it said it was ready to help bring off. In a long document Monje issued semi-clandestinely on December 9, 1967, explaining tortuously his and the Party's role in the whole guerrilla affair, he reveals that he presented a plan to Ché "which I regarded as more adapted to national reality," consisting of the "preparation of the Communist Party of Bolivia and other revolutionary forces for the armed struggle," and the "coordination of simultaneous actions in the cities, mines, countryside, and mountains" as soon as a national crisis occurred.

Monje and the PCB, in other words, saw the Bolivian Communist revolution almost exclusively in Bolivian terms. Fidel Castro and Ché Guevara, who had had only slight contact with Bolivia, thought of it essentially in Cuban terms, as they did the guerrilla operation from beginning to end.

The famous dispute Ché had with Monje over which of them was to lead the Bolivian Revolution ended in a deadlock which saw the PCB pull away entirely, though not formally, from supporting the *foco*. Ché could hardly be

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blamed for not wanting to entrust the military command to Monje or any other PCB leader (this was the fundamental point at issue). Monje's insistence upon subordinating the military to the political leadership obeyed a classic Communist formula dating back to Lenin.

In the preparatory phase, which lasted from early 1966 until November 7th, when the guerrillas settled in Nancahuazú, Fidel supplied them with virtually everything they required in the way of money, transportation, communications and rear support in general. He allowed Ché to pick the Cuban veterans he wished to take with him.

Fidel continued to help Ché into the first Nancahuazú phase, but mostly in a political manner, exerting pressure upon the PCB to join the guerrillas. However, judging from Ché's request to Debray (which the latter was unable to execute because of his arrest), on March 21, 1967, to obtain for him in Havana "every means of assistance, especially money, medicine, and electronics in the form of an engineer and equipment," Fidel appears to have fallen short of giving his field commander full material support during that phase.

Equally, or perhaps more importantly, Castro failed to maintain close communication with Ché during the combat phase which began with the March 23rd battle, and in the last months had no contact with him at all. Ché complains of his "isolation" for the first time in his April 1967 summary. In May, he speaks of the "total lack of contact with Manila" (the code name for Cuba). In July, Ché finally receives "a long message from Manila," but after that, virtually nothing.

Fidel wasn't entirely to blame for the communications breakdown. Ché's receiving equipment was run down and apparently his transmitter wasn't working at all. But his radio could hear Radio Havana, as we know from his mentions of its news broadcasts. Why, then, didn't Fidel use Radio Havana's powerful transmitter to get through to Ché? Surely he need not have worried about the enemy monitoring him, since that could no longer make a substantial difference one way or the other. (By this time, September, the Bolivian Army had captured most of the incriminating documents, knew where Ché was, and was already drawing its net around him.) Yet, with practically nothing to lose, it appears from the known record of the guerrilla war that Fidel did not make any attempt to restore the communications link so vital to Ché, while Ché obviously had no way to repair his equipment himself.

Fidel did nothing to aid Ché politically, either. In April, Havana published and widely disseminated Ché's last formal piece of writing, an article called "One, Two, Many Viet Nams—That is the Slogan," which explained why he was in Bolivia. Ché indicates, in his diary, that he expected his presence in Bolivia to be publicized as a result: "After the publication of my article in Havana there must not be any doubt about my presence here," he states in his April monthly summary. But there was no announcement. For reasons of his own, Castro did not give the world the slightest hint of Ché's whereabouts.

At the end of July and beginning of August, Fidel conducted the first Latin American Solidarity Conference, a Latin outgrowth of the Tricontinental Conference of January 1966, and Ché had been scheduled to attend it. It seemed to be a good occasion to broadcast to the world the news that Ché was in Bolivia heading up a guerrilla movement. At that time, though the guerrillas were suffering many misfortunes, they had a mili-

ary record of unbroken victories over the Bolivian Army. But once again Fidel made no announcement of Ché's struggle.

Yet there is little doubt that had Fidel reported Ché's presence in Bolivia, as Ché evidently expected him to, the guerrillas would have received aid and support, and perhaps much needed manpower as well, from all corners of the globe as well as from Bolivia. That alone could have enabled Ché and his guerrilla band to survive. Had they been able to, the story in Bolivia might be a different one today.

Fidel Castro certainly realized this. Why, then, did he leave Ché to fight and die alone in the wilds of the Bolivian southeast? It would be interesting if Castro dared to discuss these questions, instead of berating the rather dense Mario Monje for his obvious errors.

For what it's worth, the Bolivian officer who captured Ché Guevara at Quebrada del Yuro, Captain (now Major) Gar Prado Salmón, stated that Ché told him that Fidel had failed him at a crucial time.

Fidel was well aware of the stake he had in Bolivia. Why, then, did he not take some drastic action to protect it, to give Ché decisive aid, or at least to find some way of rescuing him? That Fidel did not can only mean that he did not wish to. He apparently left Ché to sink or swim on his own: a decision he might have made reluctantly, but perhaps necessarily, once he thought he had done his duty in seeing Ché through the preparatory and training phases. Once the battle was joined the Cuban leader preferred to continue the puzzling game of keeping Ché's whereabouts a mystery, allowing his life and his men's lives to be snuffed out in isolation.

Considering the long-standing rivalry between Ché and Fidel over leadership of the Latin American revolution, it is perhaps not surprising that Castro allowed Ché to fail in Bolivia. His success might well have jeopardized Castro's future position and the precarious relationship begun with Ché's removal from the Cuban government and his appointment as a roving revolutionary. There can be little doubt that with a victory in Bolivia it would have been Ché, not Castro, who would have directed the projected continental revolution and emerged the greater leader.

The underlying fallacy behind the Castro-Guevara attempt to establish a *foco* in Bolivia is the theory of the *foco* itself, which stemmed from their Cuban experience and proved inapplicable in Bolivia. Though Ché inveighed against Cuban "exceptionalism," as he called it, the fact is that the "lessons" derived from the Cuban situation that he thought applicable elsewhere were unique to Cuba. The first of these lessons, for example, holding that "popular forces can win a war against the Army,"⁸ can find no support in the experience of any other country. (Even in China, Mao triumphed only after he had created a regular army of his own.)

The second lesson of the Cuban Revolution, writes Ché is that "it is not always necessary to wait until all the conditions of revolution are present; the insurrectional focus can create them." Again, this has been true of no country other than Cuba, and the Bolivian experience shows that the *foco* can be eradicated, even by relatively weak and inefficient opposing forces, before

8. *Guerra de guerrilla*, p. 27.

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 it can be properly organized. That has been the experience, so far, of other Latin American countries as well, such as Colombia, Guatemala, Peru and Venezuela.

The third basic lesson Ché believes Cuba has taught the world is, "In underdeveloped Latin America, the scene of the armed struggle must be fundamentally the countryside." But Ché found that to be untrue, in practice. In Bolivia, it was precisely the lack of support from the city (as he often complains in his diary) that prevented him from transforming the countryside into a battleground. As for the peasants themselves, though Pombo noted after his escape that Ché expected them to be unfriendly in the first phase of guerrilla warfare, by the third he knew he would have won them over. The trouble was, Pombo added, that the guerrillas could never emerge from the first phase.

It was Ché's and Fidel's overemphasis of their Cuban experience, preventing them from seeing Bolivia in realistic terms, rather than as it appeared in theory, that in the last analysis explains why Ché's last attempt at guerrilla war was a failure. It is the essential reason why, to date, Cuba has been unable to "export" her revolution to a single other Latin American country. Perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the guerrilla defeat was the destruction of the myth of Ché Guevara as a great guerrilla technician. The author of the most widely used book on guerrilla warfare in Latin America proved singularly unimpressive as a commander. Ché allowed himself and his men to take a large number of photographs of one another, and let Bustos make a series of sketches, which as caricatures were far more revealing of identifying features. All of this was invaluable to the Army. He permitted the keeping of detailed diaries by members of his command: another uncalculated assist to the Bolivian forces in their pursuit of the rebels. The diaries provided an accurate index of the morale and equipment of the guerrillas at any given time, as well as an estimate of their total strength. The guerrillas saw the risk they were taking. Pombo objected to Debray's photographs, and Ché himself realized the value of these captured materials to Army efforts to destroy him. But men who viewed themselves as moving toward historic victory could not deny themselves the pleasure of recording it, even though that record jeopardized their final success.

As a guerrilla commander in Bolivia, Ché was remarkably maggressive. While located within easy striking distance of relatively undefended oil fields, and major lines of transportation, communication and electric power, Ché wandered about the countryside with little overall concept of his objectives. He repeatedly ignored opportunities to destroy Bolivian troops, and his continual habit of releasing entire units of captured Bolivian soldiers unharmed, though humane, is unparalleled in the history of guerrilla combat. Those battles which his guerrillas did fight were often accidents which cost them more by revealing their position than they gained by a few Army casualties. Events seemed to be indicated more by Ché's circumstances than his will. He was to achieve his greatest victory at Samaipata in pursuit of medicine for his asthma, but there is no record that Ché ever caused the Bolivian government so much as the inconvenience of a cut telephone line.

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 It appears that Ché lacked the ability to plan a military campaign. He did very well as a field commander in Cuba, particularly in his brilliant victory at Santa Clara, but he was carrying out orders from Castro and seemed to be more successful establishing a fixed guerrilla base than in planning strategy of his own even then. In Bolivia under vastly more difficult circumstances, he was not even able to enlist peasant support, and it is significant that this seemed to preoccupy him far more than the ineffectiveness of his forces, which he appears not to have noticed.

But there is no denying Ché's fascination. Exiled in effect by his adopted homeland and the apostle of the Communist revolution in Latin America, Ché had little choice but to attempt to exploit whatever explosive situations appeared in Latin America. He needed a revolution far more than the revolution needed him; without one, would he fall by the wayside and become lost to history? But returning to guerrilla life at 39 after seven years of chauffeur-driven limousines and comparatively rich living cannot have been easy. Though Ché was at first to enjoy the physical rigors of Nancahuazú, it is evident that as the campaign wore on the constant pressures of primitive living destroyed his health, and seriously impaired his judgment.

Nevertheless, Bolivia proved to be a fortunate thing for Ché. Without a power base of his own, and unable to put his abilities to work without direction, Ché might have wandered around for any number of years until he met some obscure end. His record in the Congo and Bolivia was poor and it is doubtful that Castro would have supported him for many more such crusades. If his military activities there seemed to be conducted at random and without any recognizable objective, one might suspect that by dying in the service of his beliefs, Ché was to achieve a more important objective of his own.

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LATIN AMERICA

The Unexpurgated Che

Cuban Revolutionary Che Guevara's diary of his abortive eleven-month campaign in Bolivia was first published by Fidel Castro last month and picked up in the U.S. by *Ramparts* magazine and Bantam Books. It was widely criticized as bowdlerized, with key dates and names edited out. Last week New York publishers Stein & Day weighed in with an unexpurgated edition entitled *The Complete Bolivian Diaries of Che Guevara and Other Captured Documents*.

The Stein & Day book improves pointedly on the translation. Where Castro's version spoke only of "discipline" or "pressure" on the Bolivian peasants, for example, Editor Daniel James, a former managing editor of the *New Leader* and biographer of Che, interprets the diary's euphemistic *disciplina* more accurately as "terrorism." *The Complete Diaries* also offers a supplement to Che's account by including the diaries of three of his lieutenants, all of whom recounted the bitterness of their last days as revolutionaries. And James reveals that 13 of the guerrillas slain with Che were actually high-ranking Cuban army officers, four of them members of the Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party—facts which Castro's editors carefully censored.

Probably the most valuable part of the book is the introduction by James, who puts the diary's daily notations in thoughtful perspective. Che failed in Bolivia, James concludes, by ignoring his own precepts. He picked Bolivia as a centrally located focus for Latin American revolution, disregarding the fact that Bolivian peasants had already benefited from one revolution in 1952, and had no quarrel with the government or army. He highhandedly overruled local Communists and relied on imported Cuban revolutionaries. He wandered about the country with no coherent strategy, and in the end, he let his guerrillas be hemmed in by the more mobile government troops.

Yet, as much as anyone, it was Castro himself who ensured Che's defeat by leaving him to wander in Bolivia with neither the proper material nor moral support. James ascribes that betrayal to their longstanding rivalry. Had Che succeeded in leading a continental revolution, he would have emerged the greater leader, and might well have jeopardized Castro's future position. For his part, Che, as the apostle of Communist revolution in Latin America, had little choice but to go to Bolivia. Concludes James: "He needed a revolution far more than the revolution needed

THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW
25 August 1968

The End Of A Guerrillero

THE DIARY OF CHE GUEVARA. Bolivian November 7, 1966—October 7, 1967. The authorized text in English and Spanish. Introduction by Fidel Castro. Edited by Robert Scheer. Illustrated. 191 pp. New York: Bantam Books. Paper, \$1.25.

THE COMPLETE BOLIVIAN DIARIES OF CHE GUEVARA. And Other Captured Documents. Edited and with an Introduction by Daniel James. Illustrated. 330 pp. New York: Stein & Day. \$6.95.

By LEE LOCKWOOD

Dear Folks—Once again I feel the ribs of Rocinante between my heels; once again I take the road with my shield upon my arm. . . . Many will call me an adventurer, and that I am—only, one of a different sort, one who risks his neck to prove his platitudes. . . . Now a will which I have polished with delight will sustain some shaky legs and weary lungs. I will do it. Give a thought once in a while to this little twentieth century soldier-of-fortune. . . .

—Che Guevara: farewell letter to his parents.

LAST October, when the Bolivian Government gloatingly announced that it had not only captured and killed the great revolutionary guerrillero, Ernesto "Che" Guevara, but that among the contents of his rucksack had been found a complete war diary in Che's handwriting, minutely detailing his daily adventures and observations, publishers' agents from around the world flocked to La Paz to bid for the right to its publication.

Bolivian President René Barrientos, hoping to recoup some of the \$3-million of Bolivia's meager funds which had been spent in bringing Guevara's tiny band to rout, hinted openly that he would like to get a million dollars for the package. At first, the publishers vied briskly with one another and intrigued secretly with members

MR. LOCKWOOD, a member of the Black Star photo agency, is the author of "Castro's Cuba, Cuba's Fidel."

of the Government for the inside track. As months went by, however, most of the competitors dropped out, some because they feared a lawsuit from the Guevara heirs in Cuba (who presumably have some legal right to the diary), others out of dismay at the international scandal that had been stirred up by the crassness of the Bolivians, and still others out of unwillingness to accept the editorial conditions demanded by the Bolivian Government, i.e., that the full story "from the Bolivian side" must be included in any publication.

Then, in July, Fidel Castro shocked La Paz by announcing that he had acquired a copy of Guevara's war diary "free of charge" from a mysterious source and would publish it immediately in Havana and other capitals. Within a week, an English translation of this Cuban edition, together with an introduction written by Castro, appeared in this country in Ramparts Magazine, and now reappears in a Bantam paperback.

Almost simultaneously, Stein & Day publishers have come forth with what they call "The Complete Bolivian Diaries of Ché Guevara," published under official license of the Bolivian Government. It is called "complete" because it contains Che's entries for 13 days that are missing from the Castro version (out of nearly 400 days). More interesting, it also includes the diaries of three other Cuban guerrilleros ("Pombo," "Rolando" and "Braulio," all officers of Cuba's Army), which shed further light on Che's fascinating narrative, and a 60-page introduction by Daniel James which, among other things, amply fulfills the obligation to present the Bolivian side of the story by devoting three effusive pages to a political biography of President Barrientos and an equal number to Gen. Alfredo Ovando, the army's Commander in Chief.

These two English versions of Che's diary have been compared, and they unquestionably derive from the same original. Both, however, suffer

from inaccurate translations. The Cuban translation, prepared in Havana (in obvious haste), is an especially messy job; the Stein & Day version is somewhat better, but far from perfect.

CHE GUEVARA quietly dropped out of sight in April, 1965. "Other nations of the world call for my modest efforts," he had written at that time to his friend, chief and mentor, Fidel Castro, pledging "to carry to new battlefields the faith which you have taught me, the revolutionary spirit of my people, the feeling of fulfilling the most sacred of duties: to fight against imperialism." He was not seen again publicly until two and a half years later, when his grimy and stiffened cadaver, strangely saint-like in death, was brought to the Bolivian town of Vallegrande in the foothills of the Andes Mountains strapped to the runner of an army helicopter. Captured alive, he had been executed the next day on orders from La Paz.

Where had Guevara been all that time? The diaries provide a clue. He had gone first to the Congo. There, together with several other veterans of the Cuban Revolution, he had tried unsuccessfully to reorganize the remnants of Patrice Lumumba's forces. When they would not fight, Che returned secretly to Cuba in 1966. With Castro, he laid the plans for a guerrilla action in Bolivia that would serve as the base and training ground for a continental South American revolutionary movement, thus fulfilling

Guevara's dream (expressed as early as 1959) of "transforming the Andes Mountains into the Sierra Maestra of Latin America."

As Fidel Castro has related, it was Che Guevara's custom during the guerrilla days in the Sierra Maestra to jot down his notes and observations each day in a notebook, "in the small and nearly illegible handwriting of a doctor." From this raw material Che later produced a series of accounts entitled "Passages From the Revolutionary War," a book which ranks among the best war writing of modern times.

In this respect, the Bolivian diary of Che Guevara is no disappointment. In few writers does the style so transparently reflect the personality of the man. The writing is economical and matter-of-fact in tone, free

of all hyperbole yet vivid, and leavened with a fine, dry sense of humor, the butt of which is often the author himself. The narrative begins slowly and gradually gains momentum. As it tersely unfolds one experiences a rising tension, a growing sense of tragic fate inexorably working itself out. As in all good adventure stories, though you know how it ends, you cannot put the book down.

The daily accounts begin with Che's arrival in Nancahuazú in November, 1966, and end the day before his capture the following October. The journal begins on a note of optimism and humor. Having traveled from Cuba via Prague, Frankfurt and São Paulo, bald and beardless and on a false passport, Che enters Bolivia and arrives at the farm which is intended to be his base of operations. The diary begins (reviewer's translation):

"(November 7, 1966) A new stage begins today. We arrived at the farm by night. The trip was quite good. After entering by way of Cochabamba, adequately disguised, Pachungo and I made the necessary contacts and traveled in two jeeps for two days. . . . On approaching the farm during the second trip, Bigotes, who had just learned my identity, nearly ran off a cliff, leaving the jeep stranded on the edge of a precipice. We walked about 20 km., arriving after midnight at the farm, where there are three Party workers."

Other Cuban guerrilla veterans arrive in the weeks that follow, in pairs, by various routes. In the end, Guevara's guerrilla foco will contain 20 Cubans (including at least 4 members of Cuba's Central Committee), 29 Bolivians and 3 Peruvians. Of the Bolivians, 4 will desert and several others will prove unfit for combat.

Things seem to go wrong almost from the beginning. Three days after Che's arrival, two Cubans carelessly let themselves be seen by a local peasant. For security purposes, the group is forced to leave the more comfortable farm and set up a new base camp in the jungle. At the end of December, Mario Monje, head of the pro-Moscow Bolivian Communist party, visits this camp and meets with Che. In return for support, he demands to be given military and political leadership of the revolution. Che refuses, and Monje departs in anger, withdrawing the party aid upon which Che had been counting as a source of men and supplies from the cities.

In the meantime, personality clashes have already broken out between some of the Cuban veterans, and there is friction between the Cubans and the Bolivians. Che is forced to discipline two Cuban commandantes and delivers a lecture to the entire group on the need to form "an exemplary nucleus made of steel."

It is clear from almost the initial entries in Che's journal that the Bolivian operation is intended to be only the first stage in a continental revolution. The strategy was to gain a foothold in Bolivia first, then to branch out north and south, thus creating "two, three, many Vietnams" (in Che's words). Peru and Argentina apparently were to be the next theaters of operations.

Guevara correctly saw that his real enemy was the United States; his theory was that the more brush fires that could be created, the more extended the United States would become in trying to put them out, and thus the greater the chances of any single revolutionary movement succeeding. That the United States understood and feared this strategy is evidenced by the alacrity with which it moved to send materiel and "advisers" to Bolivia once it was convinced that Che Guevara was there.

BY the end of January the initial guerrilla group is complete. Che prepares to take his troop on a 25-day march through the jungle for training and toughening. In his monthly analysis for January he writes: "Now begins the real guerrilla phase, and we will test the troops. Time will tell what will happen and what the prospects are for the Bolivian revolution." To which he adds a comment that is an ominous portent of things to come: ". . . the incorporation of Bolivian fighters has taken the longest to accomplish."

Things continue to go poorly. The guerrilla force, lacking knowledge of begins today. We arrived at the farm by night. The trip was quite good. After entering by way of Cochabamba, adequately disguised, Pachungo and I made the necessary contacts and traveled in two jeeps for two days. . . . On approaching the farm during the second trip, Bigotes, who had just learned my identity, nearly ran off a cliff, leaving the jeep stranded on the edge of a precipice. We walked about 20 km., arriving after midnight at the farm, where there are three Party workers."

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Things continue to go poorly. The guerrilla force, lacking knowledge of the terrain, continually loses its way. Two men are accidentally drowned. Others contract malaria, and Che himself begins to suffer from recurrent bouts of asthma. All are hungry. The local peasantry, from whom Che hopes to enlist new recruits, exhibit stolid indifference to revolutionary ideals. Many villages speak an Indian dialect unknown even to the Bolivians in Che's force, making communication practically impossible. The march lasts 48 days instead of the planned 25.

As hardships and privations increase, so does the friction between some of the veteran Cuban officers. One of the *comandantes* "Marcos," whom Che had intended to place in charge of the vanguard, is demoted for temperament and dereliction of duty and ordered either to join the rear ranks as a common soldier or go back to Cuba. (He joins the rear guard and, much later, dies bravely in battle.)

The worst blow is reserved for Che's troop when it finally returns "home" to Nancahuazú; two of the Bolivian *guerrilleros* have deserted and have led army soldiers to the base camp, resulting in the capture of photographs, diaries and other documentary proof of Che Guevara's presence in Bolivia. Che records these events and their circumstances in his usual matter-of-fact way and then adds, gloomily, "An atmosphere of defeat prevailed."

Although a temporary period of military success will follow, this is actually the turning-point in Che Guevara's fortunes, for he is now compelled to abandon his training camp and go on the military offensive before he is ready and long before he had planned.

Beginning in Nancahuazú and moving southward, he fights a series of skirmishes with the poorly trained Bolivian Army troops and sustains a string of victories, most of them from carefully planned ambushes laid according to the classic model described by Guevara in his handbook. On

Guerrilla Warfare. However, April proves one of the cruelest months for Che. On the 17th, he is accidentally separated from his rear guard, reducing his forces by more than 20 per cent, including five Cubans. (Though he will spend months searching for them, he will never see them again.) On the 20th, the revolutionary ideologue Régis Debray, who had departed against Che's wishes after spending a month with him, is captured near Camiri and immediately becomes an international *cause célèbre*.

Guevara is now obliged to move northward again, taking to the inhospitable mountains and fighting as he goes. Victories continue, but now they are paid for with mortalities and casualties in his already meager forces which he is unable to replenish with even one Bolivian peasant recruit. He

is cut off from support from the cities, and he has lost radio contact with Havana. Ascending into the mountains, Che is again visited with a series of horrendous asthma attacks. His medicine exhausted, he can no longer march and must alternately ride a mule (*Rocinante*?) or, when he loses consciousness, be carried on a litter. His sickness has begun to demoralize his men.

The diary entries of this time, faithfully recording each detail of mounting adversity in an unbroken tone of incandescent courage and optimism, invoke a growing melancholy in the reader. Upon hearing on the radio that 16 American anti-guerrilla experts have arrived in La Paz to train the Bolivian rangers, Che notes with satisfaction: "We may be taking part in the first episode of a new Vietnam."

BY August, Che records that his band is now down to 22 men, three of whom are disabled, and subsisting on horse-meat. Guevara's asthma is now so advanced that he has begun to lose control of his temper, berating his men and abusing his horse. For the man who had once written, "Now a will which I have polished with delight will sustain some weary lungs and shaky legs," this breach of self-discipline is a severe blow. He calls a meeting of his men: "We are in a difficult situation . . . there are moments when I am afraid of myself. This will change, but we must

all share equally the burden of the situation, and whoever feels he cannot stand it should say so. This is one of those moments in which great decisions must be made, because a struggle of this type gives us the opportunity to become revolutionaries, the highest rung on the human ladder, and also allows us to graduate as men. Those who cannot reach either of these stages should say so and leave the struggle."

By September, Che is bottled up in the mountains, desperately searching for an escape route from the tightening encirclement of the Rangers. Practically every new entry begins with the notation, "A black day." Though now aware that he is probably reaching his end, he still possesses enough spirit for a moment of humor: "I almost forgot to emphasize the fact that today, after something like six months, I bathed. This constitutes a record which several others are already approaching."

Why did Che Guevara fail? Unquestionably, the most significant cause of his defeat was his inability to attract the support of the Bolivian peasants. During 11 months of operations over an extensive rural area, not a single native joined the guerrilla band. Instead, as Che himself admits, the peasants responded to his urgings with indifference and duplicity, and many served as paid informers to Barrientos's troops.

One reason for this was lack of sufficient preparation. It seems incredible that neither Che nor any of the Cubans had taken the trouble to learn Quechua, the most common dialect spoken by the Bolivian Indians, before arriving in Bolivia; it is equally incredible that there was not at least one Bolivian in the group who spoke Guarani, the other prominent Indian tongue of the region.

More significant may have been a miscalculation by Castro and Guevara in attempting to duplicate the success of the Cuban revolution by transposing its tactics wholesale to a Bolivian setting. The two situations are not identical.

When Fidel Castro landed in the Sierra Maestra in 1956, he was a well-known Cuban patriot who was returning to his own country at the head of a revolutionary force who were

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99 per cent Cubans. Castro had no political program or ideology except that of ridding Cuba of a dictatorship and restoring a democratic government. He operated in a territory (Oriente Province) which he knew personally; he had, in fact, grown up among its peasants and spoke their dialect. Hence, Castro was able to obtain the overwhelming support of the peasantry, a factor which proved decisive to the success of his revolution.

By contrast, in Bolivia Che Guevara was a famous Cuban leader on foreign soil. He was the chief of a revolutionary band that was also largely made up of foreigners. He was an acknowledged Communist doctrinaire whose revolutionary program involved the communization not only of Bolivia but of all Latin America. In effect, he was the agent of a foreign power operating on Bolivian soil—at least, in the eyes of the Bolivians. He did not speak their language. Given these circumstances, it does not seem surprising that the Indian peasants offered a cool reception to the bearded foreign warriors, or that the Government was able to capitalize on their natural xenophobia and turn them into informers.

One wonders, also, at the inadequate planning that seems to have characterized the preparations for the Bolivian adventure. Were Castro and Guevara simply overconfident or over-optimistic? Why, for example, were not more Bolivians involved in the operation from the beginning, perhaps receiving their preliminary training in Cuba? Why did not the Cuban veterans (whom Che accuses of having grown soft and lazy in desk jobs during the nine years since the revolution) undergo a rigorous reconditioning before they left? (Some had no training.)

Once in Bolivia, why didn't the Cubans, instead of doing most of the fighting, function as "advisers" to the Bolivian guerrilleros (as did the United States experts to the Bolivian Rangers who ultimately defeated Che)? Why didn't Che, who knew beforehand that there would be trouble with the Bolivian Communist party, ar-

range other lines of support in advance to ensure that his guerrilla would not be cut off from the cities?

With more planning, better luck, and a guerrilla cadre mainly staffed and led by Bolivians, could the revolutionary effort have succeeded? There is no sure answer. "Pombo's" diary tells us that Che expected victory in Bolivia to take at least 10 years. Certainly many of the conditions that spawn revolutions do exist in Bolivia, among them extreme rural poverty, a feudal system of land ownership, exploitation and suppression of the tin miners, corruption at all levels of government, and a revolutionary tradition.

Daniel James, in his introduction to the Bolivian edition of Che's diaries, ascribes Che's defeat in part to his failure to appreciate the tremendous political popularity of President Barrientos, whom James characterizes as "a typical Latin-American revolutionary"—an assertion likely to cause guffaws even among Barrientos's cronies. Barrientos's regime, which began with a coup d'etat, is so shaky that it almost fell during Guevara's short-lived period of victories and is now tottering again because one of his ministers stole a copy of Che's diary and sent it to Fidel Castro, enabling him to publish it first.

Were there sufficient space, it would be interesting to compare the two introductions, by Fidel Castro and Daniel James, which represent points of view that could not be more opposite. However, one matter in James's essay must be mentioned. At the beginning, and again at the end of his Introduction, he devotes several pages to a discussion of what he calls the "rivalry" between Guevara and Castro.

According to James's somewhat muddled exposition, the two had never gotten along since their days together in the Sierra Maestra (though both had carefully hidden their feelings). When Che returned to Cuba in 1965 from Algeria, Castro, out of pique at Guevara's supposed efforts to assume the ideological leadership of the Cuban revolution, ban-

ished his first to the Congo and then to Bolivia (after which Fidel "copied Che's ideological program"). When Guevara began to encounter adversity, James goes on, Fidel purposely withheld the aid and support that could have saved his life, and abandoned Che "to fight and die alone in the wilds of the Bolivian southeast," thus eliminating his chief rival to the leadership of the Latin-American armed struggle.

Suffice it to say that there exists not one shred of documentary evidence, either in Che's diaries or anywhere else, to support this fantastic story. In Cuba, since his departure in 1965, Guevara's name and image have been promoted incessantly by Castro's propaganda organs. If anything, Fidel's support of his comrade has been overenthusiastic, as witness the O.L.A.S. conference of 1967, where Che was clearly identified as the new Bolivar of South America's Socialist revolution—which no doubt helped stimulate United States action in Bolivia. As for Guevara's feelings for Castro, they are nowhere expressed more movingly than in his farewell letter to Fidel:

"If my final hour finds me under other skies, my last thought will be of this people [the Cubans] and especially of you. I am thankful for your teaching, your example, and I will try to be faithful to the final consequences of my acts. . . . I embrace you with all my revolutionary fervor!"

It must be left to the reader to speculate why James (who has published a violently anti-Castro book about Cuba) sees fit to devote so much of his Introduction to this gratuitously vicious slur on Fidel Castro.

Yet no amount of scandal or intrigue will tarnish Che Guevara's Bolivian diary or prevent it from being read as one of the most transcendent documents of our time. More than a simple war journal, it is a rare self-portrait of the compleat revolutionary. Out of this diary of defeat emerges a triumphant legacy of courage, selflessness and devotion to principle of heroic dimensions. The revolutionary movement to which he so willingly sacrificed himself, though temporarily weakened by his death, must ultimately be fortified by the exemplary testament which he has left it. <

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September 1968

The Ninth World Youth Festival:
Scene of Dissension and Discontent

The Ninth World Youth Festival (WYF), held in Sofia, Bulgaria from 28 July until 6 August, did not prove to be the grandiose demonstration of the "unity of youth in the struggle against racism, imperialism and neo-colonialism" that its organizers, the Moscow-controlled international youth and student fronts (World Federation of Democratic Youth -- WFDY, and International Union of Students -- IUS) had hoped for. Instead, it was characterized by dissension from the beginning and only rigid security measures prevented a greater manifestation of dissatisfaction and disturbance.

The political focus of the Festival was on Vietnam, the only subject on which it was thought all participants could agree in principle. But even militancy on the bitter war in Vietnam and the traditional joyous atmosphere of the Festival, characterized by dancing, parades, festive displays, gymnastics, etc., could not really be reconciled. Indeed, the joyous atmosphere was criticized by Czechs, Yugoslavs and the New Left; elements of the latter emphasized violence and uncompromising revolution aimed at the destruction of capitalism and imperialism which they see epitomized by the U.S. and U.S. policy in Vietnam. To that extent the Vietnam issue, too, contributed at the Festival to demonstrating the growing fragmentation in the Communist world and emphasized the split between orthodox Communists and the New Left, particularly since there were no open ideological debates in the many scheduled forums and seminars in which views might have been exchanged or reconciled, and some middle ground formed.

Participation

Even participation fell short of the expected; it was officially claimed that 18,000 delegates were present, including 3,000 to 4,000 Bulgarians, as against the earlier announced figures of 25,000 to 30,000 which would have made it one of the largest WYF's. According to the sponsors, the delegates represented 138 countries and 30 international and regional organizations though only 115 paraded on the opening day, including such "countries" as West Berlin, Palestine, Reunion, Martinique. There were no representatives from China and Albania, or from Cuba; the latter decided to boycott the meeting because its demands that the Festival be held in Havana were not accepted, -- although officially Havana Radio stated on 28 June, boycott was due to the rejection by the Festival sponsors of the true revolutionary spirit as espoused by Guevara and Castro. Although there was no Cuban delegation, some Cubans studying in Europe were present. As at previous Festivals and at other front organization meetings, there were some African "delegations" composed of Western European-based students whose representative status was challenged by the home delegation, e.g. Congo-Kinshasa, Somalia, Algeria, Tunisia. Delegates from most non-Communist countries were screened by orthodox

Communists who controlled the delegations and saw to it that accommodations in Sofia were arranged so as to isolate as much as possible troublesome delegations, such as the Czech, Yugoslav and West German.

An "Undemocratic" Atmosphere

From the outset, however, the Bulgarian hosts were clearly apprehensive, realizing that this WYF was to take place against a totally different background than any previous one: The unity of the Communist world had been fragmented and students had risen as a powerful force in both West and East, much less willing to be manipulated by adults of any political persuasion. Yet, the Festival organizers saw no alternative but to manipulate and control, and in the process put Communist authoritarian power, intolerant of any form of criticism, on display. All events of the Festival were saturated with military and civilian security forces who used administrative harassment and strong-arm tactics against various "dissidents," quashing incipient protest demonstrations and spontaneous gatherings for discussions outside the formal agenda and excluding politically unreliable delegates from parading. To the extent of their ability they prevented dissidents from conducting seminars or the like, and in several instances (Czechs, French, Dutch, Danes, Belgians) from entering the country. The Bulgarians, the International Preparatory Committee (IPC) and perhaps to a lesser extent the ultimate organizers and financiers, the Soviets, share the onus for these excessive security measures which affected foremost the New Left, but also youths from Socialist countries of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. -- The Norwegian delegation, upon its return from the WYF, passed a resolution to be sent to the IPC, labelling the WYF^a propaganda instrument for an authoritarian political standpoint." Particular concern was expressed by the Norwegians over ruthless police action against all dissidents and the rigged agenda and program which blatantly prohibited the expression of anything but the orthodox Communist line.

"Solidarity" Days

29 July was designated as Solidarity with Vietnam Day. More than 40 separate meetings and film showings were held, photo exhibitions took place and literature was distributed. The day concluded with a rally organized around a torchlight parade. The declaration of support for Vietnam which emerged pledged that the delegations, after returning home, shall intensify their efforts in support of Vietnam and against the U.S. policy. Vietnam Day was well organized but tedious; delegates drifted slowly away long before closing. The departure of the train which was to bear gifts for North Vietnam from the WYF delegates was indefinitely postponed and the large ceremony planned for its departure was cancelled.

A day of Youth Solidarity with the Peoples Struggling for National Liberation, Peace, Democracy, and Social Progress (31 July) was similar in character to Vietnam day. Several meetings were held, with one of the larger ones devoted to the delegations from the Arab countries but

overall attendance was not good (the embarrassed Bulgarians finally trucked in several bus loads of "participants"). The Arab delegations were present in strength (with the notable exception of official Algerian delegates who had hosted an early July Arab caucus urging boycott if any Israelis participated) and there were small contingents from Communist countries, but it is not certain that either the Czechs or the Rumanians attended. Western representation was poor because of the narrow anti-Israeli focus of the affair. On the whole, the Arab-Israeli dispute captured only limited interest.

Message from U Thant Exploited

The Secretary General of the UN, U Thant in a message to the WYF said inter alia: "I understand that the primary objective of the Youth Festival is to promote the highest ideas of mankind and to promote peace and friendship among nations ... I am very confident that these ideas of peace and friendship are not only necessary but imperative if we are to shape the future according to the [U.N.] Charter ... I want to take this opportunity of wishing the World Festival of Youth and Students success." U Thant's message was propagandistically exploited: it was distributed in a WFDY hand-out, with his picture in the middle of a text featuring a bitter WFDY attack made on 20 July against U.S. policy in Vietnam.

The Czechoslovak Problem

One of the major problems troubling the Festival was the role of the Czech delegation in view of Czechoslovakia's emphasis since the beginning of the year on seeking its "own road to Socialism." This was compounded by the uncertainty which arose from the Soviet-Czech confrontation in Cierna and the subsequent Bratislava meeting between the Czechs, Soviets, East Germans, Poles, Hungarians and Bulgarians -- both of which occurred while the Festival was in progress.

The large Czechoslovak delegation was given a cool reception on the opening day in the stadium but was greeted more warmly by spectators along the parade route. In the stadium, the Czech delegation chanted continually "Dubcek and Svoboda." One group stopped in front of the reviewing stand, chanting in Bulgarian "Our democracy is our affair!" and "Sofia, wake up!" The Czechs carried pictures of Dubcek and Svoboda, and were, apart from the North Koreans, the only delegation to carry pictures of their own leaders.

In the meantime, a group of 31 Czech youths was turned back at the Yugoslav/Bulgarian border on July 26. The Bulgarians gave as reason for denying the group entry that they "had long and unkempt hair, their faces had not been washed for weeks, and their clothing was greasy and provocative"; moreover, the group "might have brought contagious diseases into the country." A Festival Press Center statement of 30 July spoke of "an attempt to darken the atmosphere at the WYF," which was at best a rationalization for the exclusion of some delegates (from Holland, Belgium,

the UK, Denmark, Iraq and other countries). The statement asserted that it is only "natural that a country has the right to not allow people into its territory because they might be contaminated or carry diseases."

On 30 July, the Czech press voiced concern over the manner in which the Bulgarians treated the Czech delegation, and cited such incidents as efforts to forbid the crowds at the opening ceremonies to cheer the Czechs, confiscation at the border of Czech publicity material and reproduction equipment, refusal to allow the Czech delegation access to Czech newspapers, and the removal of a stage -- paid for by the Czechs -- intended for the performance of Czech dances. Czech papers stated that most young Bulgarians sympathized with the Czechs "but were prevented from a public expression of friendship" for fear of being observed or overheard.

On 31 July, just before the Cierna confrontation, the leader of the Czech delegation, Dr. Zbynek Vokrouhlicky, chairman of the Czechoslovak Student Organization (and President of the International Union of Students, the Soviet-controlled international student front headquartered in Prague) returned to Prague carrying a letter to party leader Dubcek from the Czech delegation to the WYF, which stated that the delegates unequivocally supported the government's activities aimed at the development of Democratic Socialism in Czechoslovakia. Prior to his 31 July departure from Sofia, V. held a press conference in which he detailed the harassments aimed at the Czech delegation (see preceding paragraphs). In the meantime, on 2 August, the Prague domestic press service reported that its Sofia reporter had advised that the talks at Cierna had to some extent already influenced the atmosphere at the Festival.

In a press conference on 2 August, Dr. Vokrouhlicky observed that the Czech delegation was accepted as "something less than an enfant terrible" and "with suspicion ... and even fear" and as a result had been isolated and its actions limited. He referred to the various harassing actions mentioned above. But, he said, despite all this the delegation would stay throughout the Festival even if the Bulgarians should continue their efforts to prevent the Czech delegation from giving a real picture concerning the developments of the situation in Czechoslovakia. He pointed out that efforts to isolate and discriminate against the Czechs had had opposite results -- delegations from other countries had come to the Czech delegation for many meetings and discussions and even offered their help.

The Czech delegation distributed at least two leaflets in several languages in Sofia. One leaflet, "The Whole World is Asking," stressed that Czechoslovakia is a Socialist state and its people unconditionally believe their leaders; it protested that "discrimination carried out in the name of any ideology is useless and harmful"; and it protested against pressures by WYF officials against the participation of Israel. The other leaflet, "What Are the Aims of the Czech and Slovak Students?" pledged support to the Czech liberalization program enunciated on 5 January. It

further said that "we understand the fight of leftist students in the West and we should like to unite our strength with theirs," and pledged that Czech and Slovak students will try to change the inflexibility of the IUS which prevents it from developing friendly relations among all students of the world.

Criticism from the Yugoslavs.

While not the cause celebre for some and the enfant terrible for others that the Czechs were, the Yugoslav delegation was not only a staunch supporter of the Czechs but an even stronger critic of the Festival. It accused Festival organizers of creating a situation "in which only one political platform and one exclusive concept of unity" was permitted. In a statement on 5 August, the delegation deplored the "undemocratic atmosphere, procedural manipulations, intentional spreading of 'disinformation' about the activities and views of some delegations, excessive security measures, and the dominating influence of certain organizations" -- meaning the WFDY and the IUS. The Yugoslavs also stated that they had considered leaving the Festival but decided to remain so as "not to leave the Czechoslovaks alone." They had arrived in Sofia believing that "the Festival would express the wealth and variety of ideas which the young generation, together with other progressive forces, is applying in the struggle for friendship, freedom, peace and progress," yet their own president, Janes Kocijancic, had been prevented from speaking in the main gathering.

Tanyug reported in an article datelined Sofia, August 6, that according to Kocijancic, the Yugoslav delegation did not leave because it had come to Sofia to urge "the creation of a wide front of anti-imperialist forces and to avoid disruption of that unity." Kocijancic "warned that there are delegations and individuals who take unity for granted, assessing everybody who does not agree with their opinion as a wrecker of unity" and that many monologues are "more dangerous to unity than polemics."

It had been observed early in the Festival that Bulgarian-Yugoslav relations, while reasonably correct on the surface, were, in fact, rather troubled. There were disputes over the locale for the main Yugoslav cultural presentation, Bulgarian blockage of Yugoslav newspapers, and offenses to Tito. In addition to the above citations there were other Tanyug statements which confined themselves to relating only negative aspects of the WYF, including beatings (of SDS leader Wolff and of an American TV reporter -- see below).

One article said that these "groups of people -- we call them 'specialists' -- are constantly around the participants, together with an astounding number of uniformed militamen, soldiers, heavy trucks, and police cars which follow numerous Festival program activities ... and have become an inseparable part of the Festival." The correspondent also said that the gifts from Yugoslavia destined for North Vietnam were still in the storage yard, damaged, and with the labels "Yugoslav Youth for Vietnam" removed. The writer closed by stating that in view of the prevailing

atmosphere it is not surprising that some members of the National Union of French Students (UNEF), the Lambrakis group of Greek students and the Iranian student group had left the Festival in protest.

Another Yugoslav correspondent reported that certain large delegations attempted to impose their views on others by the exploitation of procedural formalities and a well-organized press. He said "one cannot rid oneself of the impression that there has been too much diplomacy and petty political intrigue, which contrasts with the behavior of the great majority of Festival participants." The writer added that the Yugoslav and Czech delegations were subjected to frequent attacks by the Bulgarians, and that the numerous irregularities that occurred were intentional and calculated (during a Yugoslavian evening, the entertainers were harassed by constant mechanical difficulties with lighting and public address systems; also, spectators arrived to find all seats occupied by an elderly Bulgarian audience who had been bussed to the site.)

Tanyug on 6 August summed up by calling the results of the Festival "fairly modest" and added that the basic themes of the Festival -- peace, solidarity, and friendship -- had not been completely fulfilled because "the hosts, with the support of certain Socialist countries, openly imposed their own political concepts and views." Friendship "quickly waned under the fire of the undemocratic acts of the hosts" but the Yugoslav delegation carried out its mission and has received the thanks of the Czech delegation for the assistance and unreserved support extended to them.

The "New Leftists"

The Bulgarians and the Festival sponsors and organizers were also embarrassed by the actions of New Left extremists, mostly Germans but also including other West Europeans and some Americans, led by the West German, Karl Dietrich Wolff, leader of the Socialist Students' League (SDS). Wolff led a party into the Chinese Embassy in Sofia on July 31 to collect Maoist literature. On leaving the building they were arrested by police and the literature was confiscated; they were later released. This action was repeated the next day but they left the Embassy quietly when the police arrived and roughly dispersed a crowd outside. An American television reporter (Frank Bourgholtzer, NBC) and his camera crew who attempted to film the scene were roughed up by Bulgarian plain-clothesmen and their camera equipment was confiscated and extensively damaged.

Wolff was severely beaten up by Bulgarian police on 3 August and subsequently denied entrance to "open meetings." At a seminar on 3 August, he managed with difficulty to be one of the speakers. When he finished he was attacked by a Bulgarian speaker who called him a "fascist" and compared him with Goebbels. Wolff tried to grab the microphone but was set upon by a "goon squad" who hit him and broke his glasses. Other SDS members were prevented from helping him. When Wolff and his SDS group managed to get out of the room, his walkout was joined by Czech, Rumanian, Yugoslav, Polish and some Bulgarian delegates. In a press conference on 4 August, Wolff said that the SDS had considered walking out but decided

against it because of the encouraging support from the Czech, Rumanian and Yugoslav delegations. Wolff's followers later complained that "imposed unanimity, controlled discussion, and empty cries of friendship are no substitutes for critical analyses of the forces of capitalism and the means and strategy of combating them."

On the second day of the WYF, angered by Bulgarian control of an SDS-led demonstration at the American Embassy, the SDS contingent of the West German WYF delegation held an impromptu meeting on the steps of the Dimitrov mausoleum at which Wolff, the main speaker, charged that at a time when Vietnamese patriots are dying the IPC was trying to "depoliticize" the Festival by not allowing the leftist forces to express their militant solidarity with Vietnam. He condemned the "fun and games" nature of the opening ceremony and the IPC control over radical student groups. The meeting attracted a large group of delegates but was broken up by groups of tough young Bulgarians.

At an unsanctioned, but tolerated, meeting on 31 July, about 300 West European leftists heard Wolff announce that a communique had been written which condemned "imposed unanimity, controlled discussions, and empty cries of friendship" at the Festival. He cited as examples the exclusion of the UNEF students from the French delegation -- they were demoted to a tourist category -- and the physical abuse suffered by Iranian delegates at the hands of the Bulgarians.

A flyer circularized by the SDS and entitled the "Fourth Motto Movement," invited to a forum on "strategy and tactics of the anti-imperialist struggle." At the forum, the SDS pushed for the addition of "Revolutionary Struggle" to the Festival theme of "Solidarity, Peace and Friendship."

New Left Views on Latin America

A New Left "Teach-In" on Latin America and Revolution drew about 300 European participants as well as representatives of the Latin American delegations. A move by the Chairman of the Dutch Committee for Solidarity with Cuba to send a telegram to Castro regretting the absence of a Cuban delegation started an acrimonious exchange. A Latin delegate denounced the excessive preoccupation with Cuba at the expense of concern with the problems of the other Latin American countries. He argued that the telegram was not appropriate since Cuba had been invited but chose not to attend, only to be hooted down amid murmurs of provocation.

An SDS (Germany) presentation on Latin America concluded that guerilla activity, which under Soviet influence was being neglected in favor of parliamentary tactics, must be stepped up. The telegram to Castro was endorsed in the end and an inconclusive approval given for stepped-up parliamentary and guerrilla activity. The meeting ended in a free-swinging fight which started when a Honduran speaker drew boos for castigating the Venezuelan CP for failing to lead the nation's youth in guerilla warfare. According to AFP, the teach-in had been organized because Latin American delegates were frustrated over the lack of attention to their problems.

Conflict over Israeli Participation

Israel's delegation, composed mainly of Arab members of the youth wing of the pro-Arab branch of the divided Israeli CP, received a cool reception in the stadium and some delegations (e.g., those of Lebanon, Palestine, and Sudan) chanted slogans in support of Palestine Arabs and against Israel and Zionism. On the Arab side, it was announced 27 July that Algeria would not officially take part in the Festival. It had been assumed, the delegation said, that the Festival was progressive, but Algerian youth could not participate side by side with a pro-imperialist, Zionist delegation. However, there was an unofficial delegation from the National Union of Algerian students (presumably students in Paris) which declared that it did not agree with the "irresponsible decision" of La Jeunesse du Front de la Liberation Nationale (JFLN). The Sudanese press of 30 July reported a joint statement by the Islamic University Students Union, National Youth Organization, Workers' Youth Organization, and the UMMA Youth demanding immediate withdrawal of the Sudanese delegation to the WYF and an investigation into the manner in which the delegation had been selected in view of anticipated Israeli participation, and charged that the delegation was not a national one but represented various Sudanese Communist front organizations.

Other youth organizations joined Danish, Austrian, and Dutch youth and student groups in their protest against the discriminatory policy applied by the Festival organizers with respect to Israel. Two Norwegian student unions along with Danish and Dutch groups decided to boycott the Sofia gathering because of the IPC's decision to allow only Communist and Arab groups to represent Israeli youth.

A report by a Komsomolskaya Pravda correspondent in Sofia dated 30 July discussed a leaflet entitled "Apartheid in Sofia" which stated that "Arab intolerance and Communist conformism have joined forces to exclude the democratic youth of Israel, who are seeking partners for peace." The Soviet reporter claimed that the "genuinely democratic youth of Israel is represented in Sofia: that section of the youth that advocates peace and cooperation with the Arabs, a cessation of aggression, and a relinquishing of its fruits."

Other Problems of Representativity

The question of representation was a source of trouble among other delegations as well. Members of the radical National Union of French Students (UNEF) were excluded from the official delegation by the Communist-dominated French Preparatory Committee because of their statements criticizing the French CP's attitudes during the French student riots of May and June. AFP reported (5 August) that a UNEF communique issued the same day noted the expulsion of its delegation to the WYF from Sofia and the annoyances to which its members had been subjected. UNEF felt the expulsion was "to keep the meaning of the magnificent struggles of May and June, launched by the French students and youth against capitalism, from

being explained to the world's youth." The communique added that this step appears to have been taken at the request of the Union of French Communist Youth (UJC) which gave only lukewarm support to the UNEF revolutionary movement in May-June. Moreover, said UNEF, its leaders had been turned back at the border with the aim of excluding UNEF from the Festival, even though UNEF was a full member of the French National Preparatory Committee. UNEF stated the IPC refused to intervene and noted the presence of the UNEF members as tourists, which did not prevent the Bulgarian police from breaking into their hotel rooms the night of 5 August to expel them from the country.

Further trouble was caused by the appearance of "Tunisian" delegates who, according to the official Tunisian delegation, had been sent by the French Communist Party as members of the French delegation. Tunis-Afrique Presse, on 2 August, reported that the official delegates were indignant because these interlopers ("students of Tunisian nationality who had come from abroad") were allowed to speak in the name of Tunisia and the official delegation had consequently decided not to participate in the Festival any further. They were supported in their withdrawal action by a number of delegations, including those from Czechoslovakia, Rumania, Niger and Mali as well as the Pan-African Youth Movement. However, when the IPC subsequently agreed that the official Tunisian delegation was the only correct one, Tunisia resumed participation.

Another serious incident involving the Tunisian delegation occurred on 3 August when members of the group were beaten up by Bulgarian security men and then taken to police headquarters for a three-hour interrogation. They had to have hospital treatment for their injuries. The Tunisian Foreign Minister summoned the Bulgarian Ambassador to demand for an explanation and a protest note, approved by the Pan-African Youth Movement, was sent to the Bulgarian Preparatory Committee and Sofia authorities. The Tunisian delegation received an official apology. The Bulgarian press reported that the authorities "express profound regret over the incident and certain acts by members of the People's Militia that went beyond what was needed."

The Kinshasa daily Tribune Africaine of 6 August reported that the Congolese delegation walked out in protest over the seating of a rival Congolese youth group claiming to represent the so-called Paris-based Popular Republic of the Congo. The rebel group was composed of leftist radicals affiliated with Simba leader Christophe Bgenye, who went into exile after the collapse of the 1964-65 rebellion. The official delegation was largely composed of members of President Mobutu's own JMPR Youth Movement. It is to be noted that both groups had official invitations to the Festival.

At a joint press conference in Mogadiscio on 31 July the Somali Youth Council (SYC), the Somali Youth Organization (SYO), and the Youth of Somali Coast Liberation Front (JFLCS) repudiated the Somali delegation to the WYF. They denounced the Soviet Embassy and the leader of the leftist

Somali Democratic Union (SDU) for excluding all delegates except SDU members at the last minute and without informing the National Preparatory Committee.

Soviet Appraisal of Festival

Soviet propaganda has sought to paper over the political, ideological, and physical clashes at the Festival, by portraying the festival as a vivid display of solidarity on Vietnam -- the sole issue, in Belgrade's more candid view, on which there was any solidarity at all. TASS on 6 August cited "the GDR, Bulgarian, and USSR" delegations as concurring that the gathering was a resounding success. The Soviet press did not mention any of the physical attacks on newsmen and delegates reported by the Western press or any of the incidents stemming from the effort to isolate the Czechoslovak and Yugoslav delegations. It only indirectly acknowledged the political and ideological clashes at the Festival by propaganda counterattacks against views expressed in speeches it did not report. Throughout the Festival Soviet media continued indirectly to explain away any unpleasantness by raising the spectre of plots of "imperialist centers" to "infiltrate" and "undermine" the Festival.

Moscow Radio Peace and Progress broadcast to China on 3 August a commentary "Why does the Maoist Propaganda not mention the WYF in Sofia?" It defended the WFDY and the IUS, which the Chinese had attacked as representing "nobody," and said that the reason the Chinese press ignores the WYF is because these two organizations have organized it; if it were to discuss the Festival, Peking would have to "admit their high reputations" and the "Peking forgers will never do this because they are afraid of self-exposure." In another broadcast to China on 7 August, "Why did Chinese Youth Delegates Fail to Take Part in the Sofia WYF?" the Soviets stated that exposure in Sofia would have made Chinese youths aware of the fact that the USSR and not China leads the world's revolutionary youth and that the lies of the Peking ruling clique would have been exposed.

Sofia BTA, 30 Jul 68

'UNINVITED' CZECH YOUTHS DENIED ENTRY PROTEST

The Ninth World Festival of Youth and Students continues in Sofia for the third day in an atmosphere of genuine friendship. At this world youth meeting Sofia is extending hospitality to over 20,000 delegates and guests who, even at the frontier checkpoints, were met cordially both by the official organs and by the population.

But a group of "uninvited visitors" from Czechoslovakia tried to join the young people who came to the festival with open hearts united by the ideas of solidarity, peace, and friendship, the ideas of the festival. This group was dirty. The members had long and unkempt hair, their faces had not been washed for weeks, and their clothing was greasy and provocative. They claimed to be festival participants. At the Kalotina checkpoint, on the Bulgarian-Yugoslav frontier, the group deliberately caused a provocative scandal.

In connection with this incident the Czechoslovak News Agency, TANYUG, and some Western news agencies disseminated distorted reports. The facts, checked by special BTA reporters on the spot at the Kalotina checkpoint, are as follows: "About 30 young people from Czechoslovakia with an extremely improper appearance arrived at the checkpoint on 26 July. They were followed by a camping van. They said they were coming to the festival. Asked by the frontier officers to produce their festival cards, they replied that they had no festival cards but wanted to attend the festival as tourists. It was explained to them in a polite manner that they could not be allowed into Bulgaria looking as they did. It was suggested that they tidy up in the nearest inhabited locality. They categorically refused and as a demonstration sat down on the curb and in the road, thus tying up traffic. Invited to move away, the self-styled festival participants "replied with rude attacks and hurled invectives at the officials, calling them names and even calling them 'fascists'."

It should be pointed out that the incident took place at a time when the frontier militiamen very kindly and calmly welcomed hundreds of guests from Czechoslovakia. On 27 July 446 automobiles and 10 buses with tourists from Czechoslovakia crossed the frontier, while 627 Czechoslovak cars and 11 buses entered the country on 28 July. All were met promptly and were quickly and politely allowed to proceed without any disturbance or incident.

To say that a hostile attitude has been shown toward the group of Czechoslovak young people, that they have been maltreated, and so forth would be contrary to the facts. In the same 2 days, young people from Holland, Belgium, the United Kingdom, Denmark, Iraq, and other countries were prevented from entering the country because of their appearance. Also at other frontier points, such as Kapitan, Andreevo, and Koula, [all BTA spellings] young people were not admitted to Bulgaria because of their appearance. It is only natural that a country has the right to prevent people from entering its territory because they might be contaminated or carrying diseases. This is an international practice.

"You can see from this point of view that we have full sympathy, and we are supported by the overwhelming majority of the delegations. Of course, there is a special situation with the delegations from those countries that signed the open letter in Warsaw to our party. First, there is the working delegation of Hungary, having different attitudes with some sympathy and understanding, and to some extent also the Polish delegation. We can see that there is a certain coldness from the side of the GDR and Soviet Union; but during the last hours of the festival the situation is a little bit better for us. I think this is closely linked with the result of the Czechoslovak-Soviet talks in Slovakia.

Yesterday we saw for example that the atmosphere at the meeting of Bulgarian and Czechoslovak youth was already much more friendly and better--without any provocation, with a certain understanding; and we are really very glad to know that we can see such an improvement during the festival."

Question: "I think many people here in this country expected all of you to come back in protest. What made you stay on and withstand all that was going on?"

Answer: "You see, my opinion was the opinion of the entire delegation. Of course the easiest way is just to leave Bulgaria; But then you know we would also be isolated and this is not a good thing for us.

And the second thing which I have to stress is that it is a world festival. It is not an all-Bulgarian national event. And this is why we consider that this world festival is a festival for all, a Czechoslovak festival, because our Czechoslovak youth and students are an integral part of the progressive and democratic forces of the world student and youth movement. And the third thing which I have to stress is that we ourselves were interested in informing the delegations in Sofia from different continents--in telling them what is really going on in Czechoslovakia. And if at the beginning of the festival we had taken such a decision to leave, we would not be in a position to do this. And we can already see those results in Sofia which have confirmed our standpoint to act in a really honest way--not being provocative, not answering provocations, not protesting; but staying like real representatives of the Czech and Slovak people, staying there to the last moment and fighting for our interests."

Sofia, 5 Aug 68 [TANYUG]

STATEMENT OF COMPLAINT ISSUED BY YUGOSLAVS

The delegation of Yugoslav youths and students to the Ninth World Festival of Youth and Students in the Bulgarian capital expressed indignation here today because of the obstruction and discrimination to which it is exposed. In a statement distributed to press representatives, the Yugoslav youth delegation shifted the blame for this situation to the festival commission and the festival committee of the host country.

"The undemocratic atmosphere, the procedural manipulations, the calculated spread of misinformation about the activity and positions of some delegations, the excessive security measures, and the dominant influence, secured in advance, of definite organizations have created a situation in which only one political platform and only one exclusive concept of unity are privileged," says the statement of the delegation of Yugoslav youths and students at the festival.

The representatives of the Yugoslav youths and students consider that such a situation does not favor the realization of the aims of the festival which is, otherwise being held in the spirit of struggle for peace, solidarity, and friendship.

"We came with the conviction that the ninth festival would express all the wealth and variety of ideas and forms which the young generation, together with other progressive forces, applies in the struggle for the realization of ideals of friendship between peoples, freedom, peace, and progress," the Yugoslav statement says. It adds that the taking of the floor at the festival's main meeting by the president of the Yugoslav Youth Union, Janez Kocijancic, was made impossible.

"In its activity the Yugoslav delegation has come across a series of difficulties and misunderstandings, some of which were a reflection of objective and understandable omissions in organizing such a large-scale gathering, while some of them we cannot comprehend," the statement of the Yugoslav participants in the Sofia festival further adds. "We are indignant and deeply offended by an unheard of act by persons unknown to us. They took Yugoslavia's name off all consignments of our aid to the Vietnamese people and youth."

The statement emphasizes that the Yugoslav delegation is presenting its remarks, observations, and assessments "to contribute to the achievement of the aims of the festival and to point clearly to those elements who delay the achievement of a greater action and political unity of the progressive youth and student movement in the struggle for a better world tomorrow."

"We have always aspired to achieve cooperation and understanding with all those organizations which sincerely urge and fight for peace, solidarity, friendship, and democratic international relations," the representatives of the Yugoslav youths and students at the Sofia youth festival say in conclusion.

LONDON TIMES
5 August 1968

Split at the Sofia festival

FROM A SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT—Sofia, Aug. 4

At the World Youth Festival today the split widened between delegates of the New Left from west Europe and the traditional communists who control the festival. Tensions increased dramatically yesterday when Karl Dietrich Wolff, head of the German S.D.S. (Socialist Students' League) and a leader of the New Left opposition at the festival, was compared with the Nazis, and then beaten and dragged from the room by Bulgarian secret police when he attempted to reply.

Today instead of publicly apologizing as they had promised, Bulgarian officials blamed the incidents that have marred the festival on deliberate provocations by S.D.S. and other New Left groups at the festival, who they accused of being anti-festival and anti-Bulgarian.

Even before the festival began, conflict was inevitable between students from the "anti-authoritarian, revolutionary left" and the

festival organizers, whom the students view as authoritarian, reformist and pro-Soviet. Soon after the start, these students (mainly western Europeans lead by S.D.S.) organized to oppose the festival's rigid structure and lack of genuine discussion.

In a recent statement, they complained that "imposed unanimity, controlled discussions, and empty cries of friendship are now substitutes for critical analyses of the forces of capitalism and the means and strategy of combatting them."

These students have caused the festival committee and the Bulgarians a great deal of trouble by organizing a demonstration near the American Embassy last Monday and by visiting the Chinese Embassy, which has led to a series of incidents.

As a result, they have been sharply criticized by the Bulgarian press, roughly handled by secret police, and often denied entrance to "open" meetings.

In spite of the incident yesterday when Herr Wolff was beaten, the Germans have decided not to leave the festival, with other New Left students, they have organized two teach-ins in search of the genuine discussion that they have not yet found here.

But the troubles of the festival organizers have not been limited to the west European New Left. Earlier this week the official delegation of the Confederation of Iranian Students left the festival. They claimed that they were molested by six unidentified Bulgarians and that their national flag was taken away and torn.

Last night the Yugoslav students voted to leave the festival, but today in a full delegation meeting they decided to stay, one delegate explained, so as "not to leave the Czechs here alone". The Czechs in turn, with their advocacy of "democratic socialism", have been the source of great concern for festival organizers.

LONDON TIMES
6 August 1968

Festival party expelled

FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT—Paris, Aug. 5

The delegation sent by the French Students' Union (U.N.E.F.) to the Sofia youth and students' festival has been expelled from Bulgaria, according to a statement published today by the union's national bureau.

The expulsion is the result of a dispute between U.N.E.F. and the communist-dominated French preparatory committee for the festival over the right to choose the student representatives. U.N.E.F. wanted to choose its own delegates, including M. Jacques Sauvageot, its vice-president. The committee refused this because of anti-communist statements made by M. Sauvageot and other U.N.E.F. leaders during the events of May and June.

In the end, M. Sauvageot did not go, but U.N.E.F. sent a delegation of 10 in defiance of the French

Communist Party. This, according to today's statement, "was stopped at the Bulgarian frontier on July 28, and one of its members, a U.N.E.F. delegate to the French committee and therefore, by right, a member of the Praesidium of the French delegation for the duration of the festival, was, without explanation, forbidden to enter Bulgarian territory."

The statement goes on to say that other members of the delegation were allowed to cross the frontier but were subjected to questioning and fines. On arrival at Sofia they were refused admittance to the French delegation and were recognized only as "simple tourists" by the international preparatory committee. This, the statement says, "did not prevent the Bulgarian police from bursting into their hotel rooms at 4.30 a.m.

M. Sauvageot is due to be called up for military service in September, unless he can get his deferment prolonged, but the French Government seems unlikely to grant this as he has promised it "rods" for the beginning of the new academic year.

"Rendez-vous in October" has been, since the elections, the slogan of embittered students and workers but what form this rendezvous will take is not yet clear. The police are preparing for it energetically, recruiting new forces and ordering new equipment. In view of this, many revolutionary activists seem ready to abandon their former tactics of barricades, stone-throwing and occupying premises—all of which are easy to deal with once the authorities have abandoned their scruples about using physical force.

Students who have benefited from a rest during July after their exertions in May and June are setting to work to revive and spread the "action committees" which were set up during the crisis. Many extreme left students, especially among the pro-Chinese groups, are pursuing the Trotskyist tactic known as "entrism"—seeking jobs in factories in order to infiltrate and eventually control the unions.

The Government is apprehensive about this development, which it fears may lead to an attempt at systematic sabotage of the whole French productive system.

Belgrade, Aug. 5.—A Yugoslav youth delegation today protested at what it called the undemocratic

atmosphere at the Sofia festival. The delegation said there were undemocratic practices, attempts to impose narrow ideological and factionist unity, procedural manipulations, calculated spreading of misinformation, mishandling of delegates and flagrant discriminations, among other things.—A.P.

Tunis, Aug. 5.—The Tunisian delegation to the festival has protested to the authorities about attacks on a number of its members by the Bulgarian police on Saturday night, the Tunisian news agency T.A.P. reported today. The agency said that the Tunisians, after being beaten up, had been taken to a police station and interrogated for more than three hours.—Agence France Presse.

LONDON TIMES
13 August 1968

Communist youth displays its discontent

By PETER BRODRICK

The author, an American who has been studying at King's College for two years and is going on to Yale University, recently covered the World Youth Festival in Sofia for The Times.

The World Youth Festival is a relic of simpler days, when there was a cold war with only two sides and one curtain. It was a key weapon in the East-West conflict for the hearts and minds of the young. A massive exercise in political education and propaganda for Soviet-style communism, the Festival was designed to convince participants from non-communist countries, particularly the third world, and to reaffirm the Marxist-Leninist faith of "true believers" from both East and West. The most successful festivals were held in communist capitals during the late 1940s and 1950s. Much money and effort was spent on holding a festival every two years. In 1957, 34,000 youths and students from 131 countries travelled to Moscow to attend the sixth festival.

Since the last festival was held in Helsinki in 1962, the unity of the communist world has been shattered, and students have risen as a powerful political force,

unwilling to be used by adults of any political persuasion. The shock of revelations of the C.I.A.'s involvement in international student politics, and the hostility of many radical students to bureaucratic student organizations have led to demands for new forms of international cooperation. Thus many observers felt that the staging of another World Youth Festival would be impossible or irrelevant.

Undaunted, the orthodox communists, who typically organize festivals planned a ninth World Youth Festival. After coups had prevented the festival from being held in Algeria, and then in Ghana as planned, one of Russia's most loyal allies was chosen: Bulgaria. No effort was spared to ensure that every aspect of the festival could be controlled from above. Everything was to be scheduled to avoid the danger of spontaneity. Delegates from communist countries were selected and prepared with great care. In most other countries, delegates were screened by the orthodox communists who controlled the

delegations. Accommodation was arranged to isolate troublesome delegations (e.g., the Czechoslovaks and the Yugoslavs). Discussion topics and chairmen were chosen well in advance. Overall the festival was organized to make any unofficial activity or communication extremely difficult, and to fragment all but official information. Huge numbers of police (uniformed and secret) were prepared.

The focus of the festival was to be Vietnam—possibly the only subject on which all participants could agree. The Albanians, the Cubans and the Chinese would not be coming. Organizers were optimistic that the festival would demonstrate "the unity of youth in the struggle against racism, imperialism and neo-colonialism" particularly against the "American aggressors in Vietnam".

But festival organizers had neither listened carefully to the New Left nor read their Marcuse. The festival they planned epitomized the manipulative and authoritarian power structure so

vehemently opposed by the New Left. Youth festivals have always been intentionally undemocratic to ensure control from above.

In spite of the festival's structure, its organizers might have coped with the New Left if they had allowed or encouraged real discussion of the issues considered vital by these students. But such discussion would have seriously undercut the festival goal of fostering a single communist orthodoxy, so the authorities resorted to blatant repression using secret police to beat, shout down, harass and carefully watch troublesome students.

The belief that the secret police could handle foreign students in the same way as they were used to controlling Bulgarians was the greatest miscalculation of the festival. Since these students were only visiting Bulgaria briefly, they had no permanent stake in the society and thus could not be intimidated. In the face of such police repression the student opposition grew stronger rather than disintegrated. The other groups of ideological heretics—the Czechoslovaks and the Yugoslavs—were as harassed as the New Left.

After several incidents a strange coalition of groups—German S.D.S., Dutch S.V.B., English Young Liberals, plus Czechoslovaks and Yugoslavs—got together to oppose the lack of real

discussion, the constant manipulation, and secret police intervention. This coalition organized a series of unofficial teach-ins and published several broadsides criticizing the festival. As the systematic attempt to oppress this coalition continued it grew steadily stronger, and a potentially revolutionary situation developed. But the festival ended before a major revolt could take place.

The most appealing and probably effective of the heretics in this coalition were the Czechoslovaks. Festival organizers and Bulgarian authorities considered the Czechoslovak virus—"democratic socialism"—dangerously contagious, and tried to isolate the Czechoslovak contingent. But nothing could prevent them from working non-stop to explain their reforms. They held 65 official teach-ins and countless informal discussions. During these meetings, they invited students from other communist countries to visit Czechoslovakia to observe "democratic socialism".

Using a skillful soft-sell, they handled both their friends and critics with good humour and patience, and reacted coolly to harassment. As one leader explained, "To convince people at the festival we must act diplomatically and not let ourselves be provoked." But the source of their greatest success was the sharp contrast between their obvious en-

thusiasm for their government, and the well-rehearsed clichés of delegates from other communist countries.

In addition to illustrating the disarray in the communist world, the festival dramatized the huge gap between the student radicals of the New Left and the orthodox communists of the Old Left. The importance of the New Left students at the festival was far greater than their numbers, for they—not the Young Communists—represented the dominant force in Western student politics today. They came to the festival seeking a real dialogue, but instead were roughed up by secret police and officially vilified as Maoists, anarchists, and the ultra-left playing into the hands of the C.I.A.

It is clear that the festival was not the success its organizers had hoped for. Important groups could not be controlled, and criticism was heard from all sides. Dissension rather than unity was demonstrated. But it is impossible to know precisely how great a failure the festival was as a whole. Information about the opposition and the incidents that fostered its development was kept from many delegates. How many delegates were infected by the ideological heresy spread by the Czechoslovaks and the New Left? Only festival organizers know how seriously their cold war weapon backfired.

CHRISTIAN SCIENCE MONITOR
21 August 1968

New, old ways clash sharply

Red-sponsored youth festival

By Paul Wohl

Written for *The Christian Science Monitor*

twangs

Two ways of thinking clashed at the ninth Communist-sponsored World Youth Festival, held in Sofia from July 28 to Aug. 6.

The clash was between the collective Communist ways of obedience to the party and the bold, independent thinking of Western student revolutionaries.

In the middle were the liberal Communists of Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia, and several Mideastern and African delegations who refused to be dragooned by their own Communist minorities into supporting Soviet-style slogans.

Albanians, Cubans, and Chinese were absent, but French, Italian, and West German students displayed portraits of Mao, Ché Guevara, and Rosa Luxemburg, an independent German revolutionist who clashed with Lenin over discipline.

So great was the impact of the dissidents that the Soviet youth daily, *Komsomolskaya Pravda* of Aug. 7, complained of "fidgety" leftists who in vain had tried to upset the "iron rulings." These leftists, the Soviet newspaper charged, were West Germans. The fact that a large part of the French student delegation was ousted and that Iranian, Tunisian, Greek, and some African students left in protest after being roughed up by the Bulgarian police was not mentioned.

Westerners hard to control

What happened seems to have been exactly what the Soviets feared. Their own youth were exposed to the free ways of Western revolutionists. The Westerners, in turn, apparently could be kept in bounds only by vast numbers of Bulgarian state security police in civilian clothes.

Everything considered, the festival was bad publicity for Communist conservatives. West Europeans believe that this may have been the last of the great Communist-sponsored youth festivals, which began in Prague in 1947 and reached their climax in Moscow 10 years later.

The two festivals which preceded the Sofia gathering — Vienna (1959) and Helsinki (1962)—were held in non-Communist countries. The Communists then were on the offensive and expected that their message would deeply impress Western youth.

Actually it did not work out quite that way. There were too many Communist defections for Moscow's taste. It was therefore decided that the ninth festival be held once again in a Communist capital.

First incident at the border

The Sofia festival started with an incident which soon became known among the nearly 20,000 delegates from 140 countries. On their arrival at the Bulgarian border 30 young Czechs were refused admission because their hair was too long and their beards were too wild. The Bulgarian frontier guards also asserted that the Czechs did not have enough cash to pay for their upkeep.

Even after the young Czechs had gone to a Yugoslav barber shop and produced evidence that they had enough money, they were refused admission on the ground that they should have travelled with the rest of their delegation. When the Czechs sat down on the ground and refused to budge, Bulgarian police chased them back into Yugoslavia with night sticks.

Quite a few West European youth were admitted only after changing their hairdo and dress to satisfy the conservative Bulgarians. About one thousand youngsters were refused entrance to prevent a suspected "invasion by Trotskyites, Maoists, and anarchists of all sorts."

The festival was opened by a march through Sofia during which the official Czechoslovakian delegation of 1,200 shouted the names of their party leader Alexander Dubcek and President Svoboda and also "Awake, Sofia!" At their entry into the stadium they were greeted with glacial silence.

Dissidents placarded

A group of West German socialist students of the Rudi Dutschke group carried portraits of dissident leaders and streamers with slogans such as "Against bureaucracy! For Socialism!"

The Czechs intended to distribute their party program and other documents, but were prevented from doing so because the truck carrying their baggage was confiscated at the border.

About 1,000 West European students sought to demonstrate in front of the American Embassy against the Vietnam war, but were chased away by Bulgarian "workers." "Teach-ins" organized by West Europeans and Americans suffered the same fate.

The ubiquitous Bulgarian "workers" who appeared marching rhythmically wherever the dissidents sought to improvise demonstrations were described by participants as security police. Bulgarians themselves believed that there must have been about 15,000 of them. Others put the figure at 100,000, which was an exaggeration but is an indication of the local mood.

German group ousted

While a fairly large number of French students were quietly ousted, the West Ger-

mans came in for special abuse. At one point the leader of the Dutschke students was called "another Goebbels." When the Germans in protest rushed to the rostrum, they were beaten up and ousted from the hall. The Yugoslavs, Czechoslovaks, and most of the West European students left the hall out of solidarity with the West Germans.

The Czechs who succeeded in taking a stenciling machine along distributed leaflets criticizing the attitude of the Bulgarian hosts.

Although the dissidents were a minority, much of what they said and did must have shattered the collective imagery of the orthodox Communist delegates and raised questions in their minds which Komsomolskaya Pravda may find hard to answer.

LONDON TIMES
2 August 1968

Bulgarians beat up TV team

From a Special Correspondent

Sofia, Aug. 1

A group of western journalists and television men covering the world youth festival were publicly assaulted by Bulgarian secret police near the Chinese embassy in Sofia this afternoon.

During the 20-minute incident, Jurgen Wagner and Klaus Dehmel, members of an N.B.C.-T.V. team were beaten and kicked by police in civilian clothes. A £1,200 film camera was broken and sound equipment was smashed and then taken away.

The other member of the N.B.C. team, Frank Bourgholtzer, was hauled on to a tram by four policemen, but soon managed to escape.

Several other journalists were also violently manhandled.

The trouble began when secret police attempted to prevent the press from photographing the exit of 15 students led by Karl Dietrich Wolff, leader of the S.D.S. (Socialist Student League in Germany) from the Chinese embassy. Bulgarian police thrust into the crowd of journalists and began pushing them. When photographers began to take pictures of the secret police in action, the police became extremely hostile.

The worst scene occurred in front of the press centre where in spite of the mounting violence and the screams for help of the pressmen, the uniformed police stood idly by.

On Wednesday, two students were arrested after leaving the Chinese embassy and their Maoist literature was confiscated by police. They were questioned for several hours, and warned that if they visited the Chinese embassy again, they would be expelled from Bulgaria.

The students insisted that they had a right to visit the embassy, and promised to return. When they did so this afternoon, the secret police were waiting for them.

Several of the Bulgarians who led the police against the journalists were recognized as the same men who had broken up the student demonstration last Monday.

Dr Vokrouchlicky Comments

[Interview with Dr. Zbynek Vokrouchlicky, leader of the
Czechoslovak Delegation to the World Youth Festival]

Prague, 2 Aug 68

Question: What is the general atmosphere at the festival?

Answer: Frankly speaking, I would say: "the general atmosphere at the Ninth World Festival of Youth and Students is not bad. I have to stress that this festival is one of the biggest in the history of all festivals." "Generally speaking, the atmosphere of peace, general friendship, and mutual understanding is there among different delegations from different continents, countries, and so forth. Unfortunately, the general atmosphere doesn't concern the Czechoslovak delegation. I do not know how to term it, but it seems to me that the best expression for it is something that the French people say, that the Czechoslovak delegation was accepted--and I would stress already before the festival--as something like an 'enfant terrible.' That is to say it was first accepted with suspicion and then even with fear; and it is clear that if you are afraid of somebody beforehand, you take some step in order to either isolate the delegation or to limit the actions of this delegation during such an event. Well that's why we were accepted by some delegations at the ninth festival at least with coldness, and as I said with suspicion."

Question: This morning, I went to a press conference in Prague at which 37 young Czechoslovak boys and girls told newsmen how they had walked all the way to the Bulgarian border. There they were halted, accused of being bearded, long-haired, and dirty hooligans and were brutally forced to return home to Czechoslovakia. Did the Czechoslovak delegation, of which these youngsters were a part, although they never got to Sofia, do anything?

Answer: "Of course we protested very strongly in front of the group of the Bulgarian Festival Committee as well as to Bulgarian authorities. But in spite of those protests, and I would also stress solidarity of action by different countries and delegations present at the ninth festival, the result of our protests and those actions was naught. The second incident occurred concerning our rostrum, in front of the Czechoslovak cultural house." We had built a special rostrum for different cultural groups of the Czechoslovak youth in order to show modern young Czechoslovak culture, song and dances and other performances. "From Saturday to Sunday, this rostrum suddenly disappeared, and we were trying to somehow clarify this problem. It was said that the building of such a rostrum, in this park, was not allowed, and that we would spread all over the place.

"Unfortunately, this was not the case and I can say that we already had beforehand, a month ago, an agreement with the Bulgarian international preparatory committee for permission to build this rostrum precisely at this place. And what is even more strange, our normal Czech newspapers were not distributed to the Czech delegation immediately. When for example, MLADA FRONTA arrived in Sofia, it was seized by the customs officials at the airport and we were not allowed to even read our newspapers, in order to be informed about the development of the situation in Czechoslovakia. And I think everybody can imagine how nervous our delegation was because it was known that many things were going on in Czechoslovakia."

Question: "Why do you think all this is happening at the world youth festival? I think a world festival should be held in a country which admits all young people no matter where they come from."

Answer: "It seems to me that our Bulgarian friends are a little bit afraid that we will speak the truth about Czechoslovakia during the festival and about the present policy of Czechoslovakia. It is nothing new that the Bulgarian press, at least, has a hostile attitude to the development of the political situation in Czechoslovakia; and that is why, I think, that they just voluntarily wanted to limit the Czechoslovak delegation in giving a real picture concerning the development of the situation in Czechoslovakia. In Bulgaria, for example, we encountered a situation in which it was already written in newspapers that there was a counterrevolution, that democracy is no more in Czechoslovakia, that even the government is powerless, and that some counterrevolutionary groups are ruling Czechoslovakia and so forth. And to give full freedom to the Czechoslovak delegation, which numbers about 800 people, could of course have some result, I mean some consequences, because the Bulgarian people don't know exactly if their newspapers are writing this, that the development of the situation in Czechoslovakia is quite different. And that is why I think that all those limits were set in order to prevent the Czechoslovak delegation, for example, from distributing some information about Czechoslovakia and even saying the truth about Czechoslovakia."

"Now do you think that is right? I mean should a country which is playing host to an international event do this sort of thing?"

Answer: "It is clear that this is not normal. If it is a national event then of course the host country has a right and can do everything it likes. But if the matter concerns an international event on a world scale, I think that it is not correct."

By the way, all other delegations were allowed to take any kind of material with them. In our student hostel we are living with another delegation, with a Japanese delegation. I have nothing against them, I wish them every success; but you know what is strange, they are allowed not only to distribute but to sell for money--to sell any kind of material, even that for example glorifying the Japanese Emperor and so on--while the Czechoslovak delegation has not been allowed to even read their own newspapers. Thus it is not normal; we were obliged to also protest in the international preparatory committee of the festival, and I can say that we have the full sympathy of this committee which has been trying to help us to emerge from this situation."

Question: "You have said that there are several thousand young people in Sofia. Surely they have noticed this very strange situation." "What is their attitude, the attitude of the Western, the socialist, and the developing countries concerning this particular situation?"

Answer: "Generally speaking I can say that even discrimination from the Bulgarian side produced precisely opposite results. Perhaps somebody wanted to isolate the Czechoslovak delegation, but when all the delegations from developing countries and from highly industrialized countries knew that we were in such a situation, I can say that they came with haste to the Czechoslovak delegation, trying to have many meetings, discussions and so forth, and not only this, but even offering us some help." There was an incident during the opening ceremony, when the Bulgarian authorities tried to prevent the Czechoslovak delegation from carrying pictures of their leaders into the hall. The Swedish delegation offered to carry pictures, or any spare pictures into the hall. The spares being in the hands of the customs authorities, the Czechs had to insist on carrying the pictures into the hall, whereupon the Swedish delegation joined the Czechs and marched in with them.