

premeditation and cowardice, but it did not succeed in killing him. Today Che is more alive than ever. He lives on through his image, worn on the chests of millions around the world. He has become a standard bearer for all those who want a better world and are prepared to fight to get it. Che remains alive, above all, in a Latin America that today is building a new politics of independence and solidarity, a politics that owes a great deal to his ideals and his sacrifice.

His spirit also lives on through the lives of the Cuban Five: Gerardo, Ramón, Antonio, Fernando and René, who have been unjustly imprisoned for more than twelve years for fighting anti-Cuban terrorism sponsored by Washington. When they were kids, they had promised they would be like him. In their prisons, subjected to cruel treatment, in utter solitude, our five heroes testify that Che is still with us today.

—Ricardo Alarcón de Quesada, President of the Cuban National Assembly,
May 2011

CHRONOLOGY

CHE GUEVARA AND THE CUBAN REVOLUTION

June 14, 1928

Ernesto Guevara is born in Rosario, Argentina, of parents Ernesto Guevara Lynch and Celia de la Serna.

1945-51

Guevara is enrolled at medical school in Buenos Aires.

January-July 1952

Guevara visits Peru, Colombia, and Venezuela. While in Peru he works in a leper colony treating patients.

March 10, 1952

Fulgencio Batista carries out coup d'état in Cuba.

March 1953

Guevara graduates as a doctor.

July 6, 1953

After graduating, Guevara travels throughout Latin America. He visits Bolivia, observing the impact of the 1952 revolution.

July 26, 1953

Fidel Castro leads an armed attack on the Moncada army garrison in Santiago de Cuba, launching the revolutionary struggle to overthrow the Batista regime. The attack fails and Batista's troops massacre more than 50 captured combatants. Castro and other survivors are soon captured and imprisoned.

December 1953

Guevara has first contact with a group of survivors of the Moncada attack in San José, Costa Rica.

December 24, 1953

Guevara arrives in Guatemala, then under the elected government of Jacobo Arbenz.

January 4, 1954

Guevara meets Níco López, a veteran of the Moncada attack, in Guatemala City.

January-June 1954

Unable to find a medical position in Guatemala, Guevara obtains various odd jobs. He studies Marxism and becomes involved in political activities, meeting exiled Cuban revolutionaries.

June 17, 1954

Mercenary forces backed by the CIA invade Guatemala. Guevara volunteers to fight.

June 27, 1954

Arbenz resigns.

September 21, 1954

Guevara arrives in Mexico City after fleeing Guatemala.

May 15, 1955

Fidel Castro and other Moncada survivors are freed from prison in Cuba due to a massive public campaign in defense of their civil rights.

June 1955

Guevara encounters Níco López, who is also in Mexico City. Several days later, López arranges a meeting for him with Raúl Castro.

July 7, 1955

Fidel Castro arrives in Mexico with the goal of organizing an armed expedition to Cuba.

July 1955

Guevara meets Fidel Castro and immediately enrolls as the third confirmed member of the future guerrilla expedition. Guevara subsequently becomes

involved in training combatants, with the Cubans giving him the nickname “Che,” an Argentine term of greeting.

November 25, 1956

Eighty-two combatants, including Guevara as doctor, sail for Cuba aboard the small cabin cruiser *Granma*, leaving from Tuxpan in Mexico.

December 2, 1956

Granma reaches Cuba at Las Cooradas beach in Oriente Province. The rebel combatants are surprised by Batista’s troops and dispersed. A majority of the guerillas are either murdered or captured; Guevara is wounded.

December 21, 1956

Guevara’s group reunites with Fidel Castro; at this point there are 15 fighters in the Rebel Army.

January 17, 1957

Rebel Army overruns an army outpost in the battle of La Plata.

May 27-28, 1957

Battle of El Uvero takes place in the Sierra Maestra, with a major victory for the Rebel Army as it captures a well-fortified army garrison.

July 1957

Rebel Army organizes a second column. Guevara is selected to lead it and is promoted to the rank of commander.

May 24, 1958

Batista launches an all-out military offensive against the Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra. The offensive eventually fails.

August 31, 1958

Guevara leads an invasion column from the Sierra Maestra toward Las Villas Province in central Cuba, and days later signs the Pedrero Pact with the March 13 Revolutionary Directorate, which has a strong guerilla base there. Several days earlier Camilo Cienfuegos had been ordered to lead another column toward Pinar del Río Province on the western end of Cuba.

October 16, 1958

The Rebel Army column led by Guevara arrives in the Escambray Mountains.

December 1958

Rebel columns including Guevara and the March 13 Revolutionary Directorate and Cienfuegos with a small guerilla troop of the Popular Socialist Party, capture a number of towns in Las Villas Province and effectively cut the island in half.

December 28, 1958

Guevara's column begins the battle of Santa Clara, the capital of Las Villas.

January 1, 1959

Batista flees Cuba. A military junta takes over. Fidel Castro opposes the new junta and calls for the revolutionary struggle to continue. Santa Clara falls to the Rebel Army. Guevara and Cienfuegos are ordered immediately to Havana.

January 2, 1959

Cuban workers respond to Fidel Castro's call for a general strike and the country is paralyzed. The Rebel Army columns of Guevara and Cienfuegos arrive in Havana.

January 8, 1959

Fidel Castro arrives in Havana, greeted by hundreds of thousands of people.

February 9, 1959

Guevara is declared a Cuban citizen in recognition of his contribution to Cuba's liberation.

February 16, 1959

Fidel Castro becomes prime minister.

May 17, 1959

Proclamation of the first agrarian reform law, which fixed legal holdings at a maximum of 1,000 acres and distributed land to peasants.

October 7, 1959

Guevara is designated head of the Department of Industry of the National Institute of Agrarian Reform (INRA).

October 21, 1959

Following an attempt to initiate a counter-revolutionary uprising, Huber Matos, military commander of Camagüey Province, is arrested by Army Chief of Staff Camilo Cienfuegos.

October 28, 1959

Camilo Cienfuegos's plane goes down over sea. Cienfuegos is lost at sea.

November 26, 1959

Guevara is appointed president of the National Bank of Cuba.

July-October 1960

Cuba nationalizes all major foreign and domestic industries and banks.

April 17-19, 1961

1,500 Cuban-born mercenaries, organized and backed by the United States, invade Cuba at the Bay of Pigs on the southern coast. The aim was to establish a "provisional government" to appeal for direct U.S. intervention. They are defeated within 72 hours, with the last fighters surrendering at Playa Girón, now the name used by the Cubans for the battle. Guevara is sent to command troops in Pinar del Río Province.

October 22, 1962

President Kennedy initiates the "Cuban Missile Crisis," denouncing Cuba's acquisition of missiles capable of carrying nuclear warheads for defense against U.S. attack. Washington imposes a naval blockade on Cuba. Cuba responds by mobilizing its population for defense. Guevara is assigned to lead forces in Pinar del Río Province in preparation for an imminent U.S. invasion.

October 28, 1962

Soviet Premier Khrushchev agrees to remove Soviet missiles in exchange for U.S. pledge not to invade Cuba.

March 1964

Guevara meets with Tamara Bunke (Tania) and discusses her mission to move to Bolivia in anticipation of a future guerilla expedition.

December 9, 1964

Guevara leaves Cuba on a three-month state visit, speaking at the United Nations. He then visits a number of African countries.

March 14, 1965

Guevara returns to Cuba and shortly afterwards drops from public view.

April 1, 1965

Guevara delivers a farewell letter to Fidel Castro. He subsequently leaves Cuba on an internationalist mission in the Congo, entering through Tanzania. Guevara operates under the name Tatú, Swahili for “number two.”

April 18, 1965

In answer to questions about Guevara’s whereabouts, Castro tells foreign reporters that Guevara “will always be where he is most useful to the revolution.”

June 16, 1965

Castro announces Guevara’s whereabouts will be revealed “when Commander Guevara wants it known.”

October 3, 1965

Castro publicly reads Guevara’s letter of farewell at a meeting to announce the Central Committee of the newly-formed Communist Party of Cuba.

December 1965

Castro arranges for Guevara to return to Cuba in secret. Guevara prepares for an expedition to Bolivia.

January 3-14, 1966

Tricontinental Conference of Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa, and Latin America is held in Havana.

March 1966

Arrival in Bolivia of the first Cuban combatants to begin advance preparations for a guerilla detachment.

July 1966

Guevara meets with Cuban volunteers selected for the mission to Bolivia at a training camp in Cuba's Pinar del Río Province.

November 4, 1966

Guevara arrives in Bolivia in disguise and using an assumed name.

November 7, 1966

Guevara arrives at site where Bolivian guerilla movement will be based; first entry in Bolivian diary.

November-December 1966

More guerilla combatants arrive and base camps are established.

December 31, 1966

Guevara meets with Bolivian Communist Party secretary Mario Monje. There is disagreement over perspectives for the planned guerilla expedition.

February 1-March 20, 1967

Guerilla detachment leaves the base camp to explore the region.

March 23, 1967

First guerilla military action takes place, with combatants successfully ambushing a Bolivian army column.

April 10, 1967

Guerilla column conducts a successful ambush of Bolivian troops.

April 16, 1967

Publication of Guevara's Message to the Tricontinental, including his call for the creation of "two, three, many Vietnams."

April 17, 1967

Guerilla detachment led by Joaquín is separated from the rest of the unit. The separation is supposed to last only three days but the two groups are unable to reunite.

April 20, 1967

Régis Debray is arrested after having spent several weeks with a guerilla unit. He is subsequently tried and sentenced to 30 years' imprisonment.

May 1967

U.S. Special Forces arrive in Bolivia to train counter-insurgency troops of the Bolivian Army.

July 6, 1967

Guerillas occupy the town of Sumaipata.

July 26, 1967

Guevara gives a speech to guerillas on the significance of the July 26, 1953 attack on the Moncada garrison.

July 31-August 10, 1967

Organization of Latin America Solidarity (OLAS) conference is held in Havana. The conference supports guerilla movements throughout Latin America. Che Guevara is elected honorary chair.

August 4, 1967

Deserter leads the Bolivian army to the guerillas' main supply cache; documents seized lead to arrest of key urban contacts.

August 31, 1967

Joaquín's detachment is ambushed and annihilated while crossing a river after an informer leads government troops to the site.

September 26, 1967

Guerillas walk into an ambush. Three are killed and government forces encircle the remaining guerilla forces.

October 8, 1967

Remaining 17 guerillas are trapped by Bolivian troops and conduct a desperate battle. Guevara is seriously wounded and captured.

October 9, 1967

Guevara and two other captured guerillas are murdered, following instructions from the Bolivian government and Washington.

October 15, 1967

In a television appearance Fidel Castro confirms news of Guevara's death and declares three days of official mourning in Cuba. October 8 is designated Day of the Heroic Guerilla.

October 18, 1967

Castro delivers memorial speech for Guevara in Havana's Revolution Plaza before an audience of almost one million people.

February 22, 1968

Three Cuban survivors cross border into Chile, after having traveled across the Andes on foot to elude Bolivian army. They later return to Cuba.

Mid-March 1968

Microfilm of Guevara's Bolivian diary arrives in Cuba.

July 1, 1968

Guevara's Bolivian diary published in Cuba is distributed free of charge to the Cuban people. The introduction is by "Fidel C."