Maxence Van der Meersch (1907–51): French author and lawyer, a humanist who wrote about the humble people of the northern region of his birth. Was awarded the Grand Prix de l’Académie Française in 1943 for *Corps et âmes* (*Bodies and Souls*), his novel about the world of medicine, which became an international success and was translated into thirteen languages.

Mario Dalmau and Darío López: Cuban guerrillas who participated in the attack on the Moncada Barracks and were exiled in Mexico.

Ricardo Gutiérrez (1936–96): Argentine poet and doctor. He wrote *The Book of Tears* and *The Book of Song*.

Sigmund Freud (1856–1939): Austrian neurologist and psychiatrist who co-founded the psychoanalytic school of psychology. He also made a long-lasting impact on many diverse fields, such as literature, film, Marxist and feminine theories, literary criticism, philosophy and psychology. Nonetheless, some of his theories remain widely disputed.

Panait Istrati (1884–1935): left-wing Romanian author who wrote both in Romanian and French. He was born in Brăila and died of tuberculosis at the Filaret Sanatorium in Bucharest.

Jorge Ricardo Masetti (1929–64): Argentine journalist who was the first Latin American to interview Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra. Founder and first director of the agency Prensa Latina. Close friend of Che Guevara. Led an insurrection in northern Argentina. Fell in combat on 21 April 1964 in the mountains of Salta, Argentina. His *nom de guerre* was Comandante Segundo.
Chronology

Entries in *italics* signify national and international events.

1928
14 June: Ernesto Guevara de la Serna is born in the port city of Rosario, province of Santa Fe, Argentina, to an upper-middle-class family of Spanish and Irish origin. He will be the eldest of five children. Ernesto spends the first two years of his life in Puerto Caraguatay, in the northern province of Misiones, where his parents have a maté plantation. He lives in contact with the wild tropical nature of the region.

1930
When he is two years old Ernesto is diagnosed as suffering from asthma – a condition that will be with him all his life.

1933
The Guevaras move to Córdoba in search of a healthier climate for their asthmatic son. Ernesto attends primary school irregularly due to his asthma. His mother teaches him the school syllabus at home, as well as French, in which he will be fluent all his life.

1936
*The Spanish Civil War breaks out, a major conflict that starts with a failed coup by a sector of the army against the legitimate government of the Second Spanish Republic. It*
rages from July 1936 until April 1939 and ends with the victory of the rebels. This will lead to the dictatorship of the Fascist General Francisco Franco, which lasts until his death in 1975. The Republic has the support of the Soviet Union, while Franco has the unconditional support of Germany and Italy.

1939
The Second World War breaks out in Europe. Argentina declares its neutrality. During the war Argentina sells iron to the Axis and beef to Britain, thus emerging from the conflict a rich and prosperous nation.

1945
General Juan Domingo Perón becomes President of Argentina with a six-year mandate.
Argentina declares war on Germany and Japan one month before the German capitulation. The USA drops atomic bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

1946
The Guevaras establish themselves in Buenos Aires.

1947
Ernesto enrols in the Medical Faculty of the University of Buenos Aires.

1950
Ernesto fits his bicycle with a small motor and goes on a trip to the provinces of north-west Argentina during the winter holidays. He covers 4,700 kilometres.

1951
Ernesto travels twice on board Argentine merchant ships
1952
Ernesto goes on a trip through Latin America with his friend Alberto Granado and visits Chile, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela and Miami. They work in a leper colony in Peru.

General Juan Domingo Perón is re-elected in Argentina. Fulgencio Batista carries out a coup d'état in Cuba.

In Bolivia there is a revolutionary upsurge that arms the people's militias (mainly peasants and miners) and these replace the armed forces. Although the tin mines are nationalised, trade unions are legalised, land reform is initiated and the indigenous majority is enfranchised, the political system is not changed and continues to fail to represent vast sectors of the population, who suffer constant upheaval and coups throughout the years.

1953
Ernesto receives his medical degree from the University of Buenos Aires.

He is conscripted for National Military Service, but is declared physically unfit for active duty and released.

He leaves Buenos Aires by train and goes on his second trip through Latin America with Calica Ferrer.

Visits Bolivia, where he observes the impact of the 1952 revolution.

Travels to Guatemala, where Jacobo Arbenz is the constitutionally elected President.

26 July: Fidel Castro leads an attack on the Moncada
Barracks in Santiago de Cuba. The attack fails, Castro and other survivors are captured and imprisoned.

1954
January–June: in Guatemala, Guevara does odd jobs, studies Marx and meets several Cuban revolutionaries, who are veterans of the attack on the Moncada Barracks. He witnesses the invasion of Guatemala by CIA-backed forces and the downfall of President Arbenz, who refuses to arm the population. Takes refuge in the Argentine Embassy.

21 September: Ernesto leaves Guatemala and arrives in Mexico City, where he works as a doctor at the Central Hospital.

1955
In Mexico he meets Fidel Castro, who has been released from prison in Cuba.

Marries Peruvian economist Hilda Gadea.

He trains as a guerrilla with Castro and his men, who are preparing to return to Cuba to launch a guerrilla war.

He is nicknamed ‘Che’ by his Cuban friends, an expression then used throughout Latin America to refer to the people of Argentina.

In Argentina, General Juan Domingo Perón is ousted from power by a military coup.

1956
15 February: Guevara’s first daughter, Hilda Beatriz Guevara, is born.

Gamal Abdel Nasser of the United Arab Republic (Egypt) nationalises the British- and French-owned Suez Canal, despite the opposition of combined Israeli, British and French forces.

24 June: Guevara and Castro are arrested by the Mexican
authorities, together with twenty-eight Cuban comrades who were training for the invasion. Guevara remains under arrest for fifty-seven days.

25 November: leaves from the Mexican port of Tuxpan for Cuba on board the Granma with Fidel Castro and eighty Cuban guerrillas, and arrives at Las Coloradas in Oriente province.

5 December: the rebels are surprised by government troops at Alegria del Pio and are dispersed. Guevara is wounded.

20 December: Guevara and his group manage to reunite with Fidel Castro and his men. Most of the invading force have been captured and killed. Castro's guerrillas number two dozen.

1957
January-May: first Rebel Army victories at La Plata, Arroyo del Infierno, Palma Mocha, El Uvero.

July: Guevara is promoted to comandante and is put in charge of the Columna Cuatro, so named to disguise the fact that there are only two. Later he will command Column 8.

Arturo Frondizi wins the presidential elections in Argentina and takes over from the military junta.

1958
24 May: in Cuba, Batista launches a military offensive against the Rebel Army in the Sierra Maestra.

July: Rebel Army victory at El Jigue.

16 October: Guevara and his column arrive at the El Escambray mountains to consolidate the rebel forces.

December: Guevara captures strategic locations in the province of Las Villas in central Cuba.

28 December: the rebel forces commence the decisive battle for Santa Clara, the capital of Las Villas.
The Young Che

1959
1 January: Santa Clara falls to the Rebel Army column under Guevara. Fulgencio Batista flees to Miami.

2 January: Guevara enters Havana at the head of his troops and claims it for the revolution. He establishes himself at La Cabaña fortress and presides over the summary trials of the enemies of the revolution.

9 February: Guevara is made a Cuban citizen in recognition of his contribution to the revolution.

26 July: Fidel Castro becomes Prime Minister.

2 June: Guevara and Hilda Gadea have divorced amicably and Guevara marries Aleida March, his assistant during the military campaign. They will have two sons and two daughters.

Guevara goes on a fifteen-day visit to Nasser's United Arab Republic and the Suez Canal. The purpose of the trip is to study the UAR's methods of land reform.

Visits India and holds talks with Pandit Nehru.

Visits Burma, Thailand, Japan, Indonesia, Ceylon, Pakistan, Yugoslavia, Sudan, Egypt, Italy, Spain and Morocco, meeting heads of state while acting as roving ambassador for the Cuban Revolution. He signs several commercial, technical and cultural agreements.

Guevara is appointed Director of Industries for the National Institute of Agrarian Reform.

He is appointed Governor of the National Bank of Cuba and takes up the study of higher mathematics for the next three years.

1960
First declaration of Havana. Fidel Castro refers to 'Our America, the America that Bolívar, Hidalgo, Juárez, San Martín, O'Higgins, Tiradentes, Sucre and Martí wished to see free'.
Guevara publishes his book *Guerrilla Warfare - A Method*, which will become the handbook for guerrilla movements all over the world.

*President Eisenhower orders the CIA to begin preparation of Cuban exiles to invade the island.*

Cuba and the Soviet Union establish diplomatic relations. The Revolutionary Government nationalises the refineries of Texaco, Shell and Esso as a result of their refusal to refine oil from the USSR.

*President Eisenhower reduces by 700,000 tons the amount of sugar the US will purchase from Cuba.*

The USSR announces that it will purchase the Cuban sugar the USA refuses to buy.

Castro nationalises major US companies and foreign banks in Cuba as well as 382 large Cuban industries.

*The USA declares a partial embargo against trading with Cuba.*

In response to the US partial trade embargo, Guevara makes his first visit to the Socialist countries at the head of a Cuban delegation: he visits the USSR, the German Democratic Republic, Czechoslovakia, China and the People's Democratic Republic of Korea.

24 November: Guevara's daughter Aleida Guevara March is born.

1961

*January: Patrice Lumumba, the first Prime Minister of the Republic of Congo, newly independent from Belgium, is deposed in a US-backed coup and assassinated.*

*The USA breaks diplomatic relations with Cuba.*

Guevara is appointed Minister for Industries.

*President Kennedy abolishes Cuba's sugar quota.*

1,500 exiled Cubans invade the Bay of Pigs and are routed by Cuban troops led by Fidel Castro. Guevara commands
the troops at Pinar del Río. The invaders surrender at Playa Girón.

Guevara attends the Economic Summit of the Organisation of American States in Punta del Este, Uruguay, as head of the Cuban delegation and denounces the US Alliance for Progress. He then crosses over to Argentina secretly for a private visit to President Arturo Frondizi.

Guevara visits Brazil and is decorated by President Janio Quadros.

Cuba completes the first year of a nationwide literacy campaign.

1962

Algeria installs a revolutionary government, having won its independence from France after a long and bloody liberation struggle.

29 March: in Argentina the military oust President Arturo Frondizi and install his Vice President in his place when they discover that he has met Che Guevara in his presidential residence in the outskirts of Buenos Aires.

20 May: Guevara's son Camilo Guevara March is born.

The Organisation of American States votes to expel Cuba.

President Kennedy orders a total embargo on trade with Cuba.

27 August–7 September: Guevara visits the USSR for the second time at the head of an economic delegation.

President Kennedy imposes a naval blockade on Cuba and threatens the USSR with nuclear war as a result of Cuba's acquisition of missiles with nuclear warheads capable of attacking the USA. Soviet Premier Khrushchev agrees to remove the missiles from Cuba in exchange for Kennedy's pledge not to invade Cuba.
CHRONOLOGY

1963

The Chinese Communist Party splits Communist ideology, and gradually the world Communist parties divide between 'Muscovites' and 'Pekinistas'.

May: an attempt to establish a guerrilla movement in Peru to fight against the US-backed military dictatorship fails and its leader Javier Heraud is killed.

14 June: Guevara's daughter Celia Guevara March is born.

Guevara attends the ceremonies commemorating the first anniversary of Algerian independence and sets down the basis for good relations with President Ahmed Ben Bella. He also attends the International Seminar on Planning in Algiers.

In Cuba the Second Agrarian Reform law is drafted.

Guevara publishes his Reminiscences of the Cuban Revolutionary War.

In Argentina Dr Arturo Illia wins the elections.

1964

In Brazil a US-backed military coup overthrows the government of João Goulart and a period of bloodletting and struggle begins.

Colombia sees the formation of two subversive groups, the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) and the National Liberation Army (ELN). The armed struggle between FARC and the ELN against the government of Colombia and later the right-wing paramilitaries will last for more than forty years.

The insurrection started by Jorge Ricardo Masetti in Salta, northern Argentina – an initiative that had the blessing of Che Guevara and the support of both Cubans and Bolivians – is routed and Masetti is killed in combat.

Guevara travels to Geneva to speak before the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development.
Travels to Algeria via Prague to meet up with President Ben Bella and returns to Havana.

Visits the Soviet Union for the celebration of the forty-seventh anniversary of the October Revolution. Meets Ho Chi Minh.

Addresses the UN General Assembly in New York.

Travels to Algeria via Canada and Ireland, to meet President Ben Bella. During a three-month-long trip he visits President Modibo Keita of Mali and then travels to Dahomey.

1965

Guevara visits President Massemba-Debat in Congo-Brazzaville and President Sekou-Touré in Guinea. He has several meetings with President Nkrumah of Ghana in Accra.

Travels to Algeria. Makes a stopover in Paris and travels to Tanzania on an official visit.

Travels to Egypt to meet President Nasser and returns to Algiers for the Second Seminar of the Organisation of Afro-Asian Solidarity.

Returns to Egypt and spends time with President Nasser.
24 February: Guevara’s son Ernesto Guevara March is born.
14 March: returns to Cuba and disappears from public life to train secretly for his Congo campaign.

April: departs from Cuba at the head of a group of Cuban guerrillas for an internationalist mission in Congo, which is to join forces with Laurent Kabila. Leaves his letter of resignation with Fidel Castro.

18 May: Guevara’s mother, Celia de la Serna, dies.

June: the revolutionary government of Ben Bella of Algeria is overthrown in a military coup.

1 October: the Communist Party of Cuba is officially launched.
3 October: Fidel Castro reads Guevara’s farewell letter.

December: after the failure of the Congo campaign, Guevara returns secretly to Cuba.

23,000 US troops invade Santo Domingo, in the Dominican Republic, in support of dictator Rafael Leonidas Trujillo.

Peru sees the formation of focos (small bands of guerrillas) that sustain action for six months under saturation bombing with napalm and high explosives. The ELN of Peru, under Héctor Bejar, then begins action in La Convención, which ends in defeat in December.

1966

Since 1961 in Venezuela groups of students and even dissident army officers have begun to form focos to prepare for armed struggle, but by 1966 the armed offensive led by Douglas Bravo has failed, as the Communist Party abandoned the guerrillas operating in the mountains.

3–14 January: the Tricontinental Conference of Solidarity of the Peoples of Asia, Africa and Latin America is held in Havana, and Cuba commits itself to support continental revolution.

July: in secret, Guevara selects and trains a guerrilla group for a mission in Bolivia in Pinar del Río province.

4 November: arrives in Bolivia in disguise and under a false Uruguayan passport to start the insurgency.

7 November: arrives at the site of his Bolivian camp at Ñacahuasú, where he is joined by seventeen Cubans and several Bolivian recruits.

In Argentina, General Juan Carlos Onganía puts an end to the democratic government of Dr Arturo Illia, in a bloodless coup.
1967
23 March: first successful guerrilla military action against a Bolivian army column.

16 April: Guevara’s message to the Tricontinental, in which he calls for ‘two, three, many Vietnams’, is published.

31 July–10 August: the Organisation of Latin American Solidarity (OLAS) holds its conference in Havana. Guevara is made honorary chairman in his absence.

May–October: a massive force of Bolivian and US troops closes in on Guevara’s guerrillas, who suffer heavy losses.

8 October: in Bolivia, Guevara is wounded, captured and then shot on 9 October.

18 October: Castro confirms that Guevara is dead and declares three days of official mourning. He delivers a memorial speech in the Plaza de la Revolución before a crowd of thousands.

1997
The remains of Ernesto Che Guevara are dug up in Bolivia and flown to Cuba.

Guevara is buried with full military honours in the city of Santa Clara, in the province of Las Villas, where he won the decisive battle of the Cuban Revolution.
Lucía Álvarez de Toledo grew up and was educated in Argentina. Having worked as a journalist and broadcaster in her native Argentina, she settled in London in 1968 and established herself as a professional interpreter and translator. Her background, knowledge of Latin America and long-standing interest in the life and works of Ernesto Che Guevara have enabled her to bring a unique understanding to the first English-language translation—and the editing—of this book.