

4/19/71

Dear Ed,

Several hours of outside work so tired me that I got to read the Arguedas chapter tonight, for I was really too tired for anything else.

It is fascinating, and I'm glad to have it. I had the essence of this story in COUP several years ago, but not in this detail. In fact, much of this detail was unknown to me.

There is nothing in it not consistent with what I had, either.

Fascinating when one considers the alleged boasting by the CIA of its control over US elections. That's the part I'd like to get from A.

Have you read "The Drug Store Liberal", by the way? Two of HHH's closest were so connected, and one presently has great influence with and is on the board of the Educational TV station in Washington.

Now does any of the seemingly farout seem at all impossible to me. That's the way they do work, these are the kinds of things they do try to do, and the methods are the traditional ones. Nothing exceptional. This is also true of the stupidities. They depend on their wealth and power, and thus do not develop the subtleties of other agencies, none of which have ever been able to pull stuff on this scale.

They usually had the left with the major media to cover themselves, but the smaller papers were reporting their operations rather regularly. For example, in Guiana. The whole operation involving the AFL, Seraphino Romualdi (who I knew), Lovestone, etc., was reported- and later confirmed by Schlesinger. And the Washington Post expert who also reported this and similar things, esp. in the Dominican Republic, got a year of sabbatical and his contract was not renewed, as I'm sure he knew when he left.

Matter of fact, the Post has just excerpted Helms' speech and had an editorial box of his and the Agency's great dedication to democracy. Did you see one paper make mention of the fact that, aside from whether what he said was honest and truthful or not (as it in cases was not, and in important cases), he made no reference to anything but the gathering of intelligence? Nothing of the Department of Dirty tricks, of all the covert activities, the violence, assassinations, etc. They are known, as in SE Asia, and have recently been very prominently in the press, all media. But the papers took his crap and played it straight. If there has been a single pointed comment, I've not seen or heard of it.

Thus, the best of possible worlds.

Again thanks,

## THE CULT OF CHE

Today, posters and placards displaying Che's portrait and the slogan "Che lives" appear in student dormitories and at student demonstrations in almost every major city in the world. The Che that one sees on these posters and placards is a heroic figure, with the unmistakable beard, beret, and piercing eyes that everyone now associates with this legendary revolutionary. However, the haunting face that peers out from these mass-produced portraits somehow seems to combine in one human countenance all the races of mankind. His eyes and moustache appear Asiatic, while the darkness of his complexion seems Negroid, and the shape of his nose and cheeks distinctively European. Perhaps this partially explains why he has become the idol of students and radical intellectuals in every continent, and why, for example, his face is the only white one to appear on posters alongside those of Muhammad Ali and Malcolm X in the black ghettos of the United States.

Since his death, Che has become a popular hero and a symbol of rebellion on a world-wide scale. In a sense, a cult has developed around his romantic image. The reasons for this are of considerable importance, for they tell

THE PUBLICATION OF  
CHE'S DIARY

Perhaps the most incredible aspect of the story surrounding Che's guerrilla operation involves the publication of his campaign diary. Following his capture and execution, the Barrientos government decided to sell Che's diary to the publisher willing to pay the highest price. However, while the Bolivians were negotiating the sale of the diary, the Cuban government mysteriously obtained a copy and released it through a series of publishing houses in Latin America, Europe, and the United States. By publishing the diary before the Bolivians could sell it, the Cuban government was able to score a significant propaganda victory and greatly embarrass the Barrientos regime. Moreover, the question of how the Cubans managed to get a copy of the diary gave rise to serious doubts in Bolivia about the integrity of the government and the armed forces. Clearly, someone in either the government or the military had placed a copy of the "top-secret" diary in Cuban hands.

On July 1, 1968, Che's diary was made public in Havana, and within a few days it was distributed by pro-Cuban publishers in Chile, Mexico, France, Italy, West Germany, and the United States. A few weeks later, on

July 19, Antonio Arguedas, minister of internal affairs in the Barrientos government, fled to Chile and was denounced by General Ovando as the traitor who had provided the Cuban government with a photostatic copy of Che's diary. Bolivians were stunned by the news, and most of the population regarded Arguedas' actions as a national disgrace. Since Arguedas had been Barrientos' right-hand man, the whole affair seriously undermined the public's confidence in the Barrientos regime and within twenty-four hours plunged the country into a grave political crisis that broke apart the coalition of parties which had previously supported Barrientos. At the same time, the three main opposition parties (the Socialist Falange, the National Revolutionary Movement, and the Revolutionary Party of the Nationalist Left) issued a manifesto calling upon the Barrientos government to resign. They also called a mass demonstration in the capital on July 20, which resulted in a violent clash with the police and the death of a captain of the Civil Guard. The leaders of the demonstration were arrested, and Barrientos declared a nationwide state of emergency. He also called upon the peasant syndicates in the Cochabamba area to come to his assistance, and some five thousand armed *campesinos* from the Cochabamba Valley were mobilized and moved to the outskirts of the capital. This appears to have been the turning point in the crisis; soon thereafter Barrientos received expressions of public support from the various military garrisons throughout the country, as well as several important political groups. Ironically, the crisis arising from the publication of Che's diary, and particularly Arguedas' part in the whole affair, came close to toppling the Barrientos regime—something which Che's guerrilla operation never was able to do.

But the Arguedas affair did not end there. Much to everyone's surprise, approximately a month after his flight, Antonio Arguedas returned to Bolivia to stand trial for his actions. In Chile, Arguedas had publically declared that

he wanted to return to Bolivia to clear his name. However, most Bolivians assumed Arguedas had received a large sum of money from the Cubans in return for Che's diary, so no one took seriously his announced intention to return home. This made it all the more surprising when he did return to Bolivia, following a month-long odyssey which took him to La Paz via London, New York, and Lima.

On August 17, the day of his return to Bolivia, Arguedas was met at the airport outside La Paz by a heavy police guard and a large crowd of Bolivian and international correspondents. When his plane landed, the reporters attempted to move onto the concrete where the plane was due to halt but they were stopped by the police. However, two officials of the American embassy, carrying cameras, were allowed to pass through the police cordon, and this obvious discrimination gave rise to heated protests from the reporters, who were finally allowed to move closer. As the plane came to a halt and the portable stairways were wheeled into position at the forward and rear doors, a rented car, escorted by several police motorcycles and a jeep, pulled up in front of the forward stairway. After the other passengers on the plane had disembarked via the rear door, Arguedas was escorted out of the front door and down the stairs into the waiting car by two police officials. He was followed by a large number of foreign correspondents who had flown with him from Lima. Arguedas was taken to the Bolivian national airline building, where he was allowed to meet with his wife and one of his sons and then to talk with the waiting crowd of reporters.

The press conference at the airport lasted exactly seventeen minutes before it was abruptly terminated by the director of the Criminal Investigations Division. Arguedas had just begun to reveal some of the activities of the CIA in Bolivia and his former ties with this American spy organization, when the director suspended the conference on the grounds that there were public disturbances in the

city and that it was therefore necessary to transport the prisoner to safety immediately. Then, amid protests from both the reporters and Arguedas, the latter was forcibly removed to another room in the building. About five minutes later, a security agent wearing Arguedas' clothing was hurriedly rushed into a car and driven away in the wake of a motorcycle escort. However, the deception failed, and the reporters waited outside the building for Arguedas to reappear. Approximately a half hour later, the director of information of the presidency appeared and admitted to the press that Arguedas was still in the building but that he was prohibited for the time being from making any public declarations. Shortly thereafter, a police jeep arrived, and Arguedas was taken to it under heavy guard. As he reached the jeep, he shouted at the reporters: "I demand that the press conference be continued in order to expose the CIA." He was cut short by a violent effort on the part of his guards to push him into the jeep. They succeeded in forcing him into it and, together with another police vehicle, it immediately sped away in the direction of the city.

Later in the day, Arguedas was taken to the Ministry of Internal Affairs, and upon instructions from the president, he was permitted to meet with the press a second time. This time he was allowed to answer approximately thirty questions during the course of an hour and a half. Afterwards he was returned to his cell in the Criminal Investigations Division and not allowed to meet with the press again.

Arguedas revealed to the press that his association with the CIA had begun in 1964, shortly after the MNR government of Paz Estenssoro was overthrown by the military. At that time, Arguedas was appointed to the high-level administrative post of sub-secretary in the Ministry of Internal Affairs. But two months after his appointment, Colonel Edward Fox, the air attache in the U.S. Embassy, informed Arguedas that if he continued in office, the

United States government would suspend all economic assistance to Bolivia and take drastic measures against its government. The reason given was Arguedas' past membership in the Bolivian Communist Party. In order to avoid any trouble, Arguedas resigned. However, several weeks later, he was again contacted by Colonel Fox, who told him the U.S. government might reconsider their opposition to him if he would meet with an American diplomat in Bolivia. Arguedas agreed, and Colonel Fox introduced him to Larry Sterfield, then the head of the CIA in Bolivia. Sterfield suggested to Arguedas that he voluntarily undergo interrogation outside of Bolivia so that it could be determined whether or not he had been a militant member of the Communist Party and whether or not the Party had instructed him to infiltrate the new military regime.

In order to clear himself with the Americans, Arguedas agreed to go to Lima for several days of intensive interrogation by the CIA. In Lima, he was exposed to three days of interviews and interrogation with the use of a lie detector. On the fourth day, he was interrogated while under the influence of drugs. When he recovered, the CIA told him they were convinced he had not been a militant member of the Communist Party, nor had he been instructed by the Party to infiltrate the new government in Bolivia. As far as they were concerned, he was free to resume his duties in the Ministry of Internal Affairs.

Arguedas returned to La Paz and was reappointed to his post in the ministry. However, as time went by, the CIA asked him to provide them with various kinds of information to which he had access in his position. Later on, they told him that they would see that he became the next minister of internal affairs. They promised to praise him in all the right circles and to present him as the ideal person for this important post. Soon articles began appearing in the newspapers concerning the marvelous job Arguedas was doing. In addition, the Americans around President Barrientos began praising Arguedas. The

president assumed that Arguedas had become friends with the Americans through his work in the Ministry, and largely because the Americans thought so highly of Arguedas, Barrientos appointed him minister of internal affairs. At that time, the CIA invited Arguedas to visit Washington and gave him sixty-five hundred dollars for traveling expenses. In Washington, they briefed him on the policies of the various Latin American countries and about the revolutionary activities and shortcomings of Fidel Castro's regime in Cuba. Evidently, they wanted to ensure that his outlook on Latin American affairs conformed with theirs.

After he became minister of internal affairs, Arguedas' relations with the CIA assumed a totally different character. According to Arguedas, under the threat of blackmail they forced him to carry out a variety of activities which served their interests. Through him, he claimed, they took control of the most important operations in his ministry, in particular the state intelligence service. This in turn allowed them to infiltrate agents into many of Bolivia's political parties and to control the information presented to the president and the cabinet on matters of internal security. Naturally, this arrangement also gave the CIA access to all of Bolivia's state secrets.

Arguedas also revealed that the CIA gave him money to corrupt various Bolivian leaders. He told the press of an instance in which the CIA gave him twenty-five hundred dollars to obtain information from an important union leader about the contacts he had made on a recent trip to China and various other socialist countries. On this particular occasion, the individual concerned refused to be bought. However, Arguedas made it clear that a good many other individuals were compromised in this manner. Arguedas also claimed that the CIA had charged him with the task of destroying the reputation of the co-director of Bolivia's best newspaper, *Presencia*. It seems that the newspaperman in question had organized a civic group to carry out a campaign of community develop-

ment in the rural areas. For some reason this greatly alarmed the head of the CIA in Bolivia, and he gave Arguedas money to employ people to paint on the walls around La Paz signs which gave the impression that the newspaperman was organizing his own political party instead of a civic group. The CIA also gave Arguedas money to further discredit the newspaperman by involving him in *un escándalo de faldas* ("a scandal of skirts").

According to Arguedas, during the time he was in office the CIA intervened extensively in Bolivian affairs. They spread information which undermined the government's attempts to negotiate credit in France. They recruited agents from, and infiltrated, nearly all of the major political parties and government agencies in the country. They also gave assistance to the military or political careers of those persons whom they were interested in advancing. Moreover, it is extremely interesting to note that the head of the CIA mission in Bolivia asked Arguedas to give Juan Lechin (the outlawed popular leader of the Revolutionary Party of the Nationalist Left) a passport under a false name so that he could leave the country and travel abroad. Although Arguedas did not say why the CIA wanted to help Lechin leave the country, it seems clear that Lechin had made some kind of deal with the CIA.

Because Lechin was an enemy of the Barrientos regime and a wanted man, Arguedas refused to give the CIA the passport. His obstinacy created friction between him and the CIA chief, which increased as time went by. Apparently, his relations with the CIA were further estranged when, under his orders, the Bolivian police broke up an underground spy network which they thought was being run by the pro-Peking Communists. Following the announcement by Arguedas that the government had uncovered a pro-Peking spy network, he was angrily informed by Hugo Murray, the CIA agent who worked most closely with him, that the network belonged to the CIA. The CIA, not content with controlling the Bolivian

intelligence apparatus, had organized their own intelligence network under the camouflage of a pro-Peking operation.

When Che's guerrillas were discovered in the southeast, the head of the CIA mission in Bolivia called Arguedas and informed him that he was sending him some "advisers." According to Arguedas, the CIA chief told him that their presence was required because of the ineffectiveness of Bolivia's security agents. A few days later, four Cuban exiles arrived and assumed "advisory" positions in Arguedas' ministry. Within a short time, the Bolivian officials in the ministry began to refer to these Cubans as *gusanos* (worms), the name commonly used by pro-Castro Cubans to refer to opponents of the regime. One of these *gusanos*, who went by the name of Gabriel Garcia Garcia, proceeded to operate completely on his own. Without consulting Arguedas, he set up two houses of interrogation where Bolivians suspected of working with the guerrillas were brought for questioning. Arguedas did not find out about this until he received reports that Bolivian citizens were being interrogated and in some cases tortured by foreign agents at both places. He became furious and notified the CIA that he would not permit this sort of thing to continue.

According to Arguedas, the situation grew worse a few months later, when the CIA asked him to influence the outcome of a lawsuit brought against an American mining company by the state-owned Bolivian Mining Corporation. Arguedas claims the CIA told him it was necessary, in order to guarantee private initiative in Bolivia, that the Court decide in favor of the American mining firm. However, it seems that Arguedas had received specific instructions from the president to ensure that the Court's decision was correct. As a result, Arguedas informed the public prosecutor that if any irregularities occurred in the suit against the American firm, he would bring the prosecutor before the Supreme Court. In the end, the decision,

reached in accordance with the law, went against the American company. This indicated to the CIA that Arguedas was escaping from their control.

On June 13, 1968, Arguedas was celebrating his birthday, when he received a call from the head of the CIA mission in Bolivia, who told Arguedas to come to his house so that he could congratulate him. This offended Arguedas; he considered the call an affront and did not go to the house of the CIA chief. However, the next day, one of the CIA agents came to Arguedas and told him that his chief was upset over the fact that Arguedas had failed to visit him. He said that his superior had a present for Arguedas which had been sent from the United States and that he should go to receive it. Reluctantly, Arguedas decided to go, in order to avoid any more friction with the Americans.

Arguedas received the present, chatted for a while with his host, and then returned to the ministry, where he opened the package. It contained a pistol, a belt and holster, and three photographs. One of the photographs was of Fidel Castro, the second was of Che Guevara, and the third was a photograph of Raul Castro receiving ammunition from a Cuban guerrilla. Arguedas interpreted these items as a blackmail threat. He believed this was the CIA's way of telling him that if he did not do exactly as they ordered him to do in the future, they would have him denounced as a Castroite. This infuriated Arguedas, and in the heat of the moment he resolved to take vengeance against the CIA. Under the glass top on his desk was a European address which had been found on one of the guerrillas killed in La Higuera. This address had been used by them as a terminal from which communications could be sent to Cuba. Arguedas wrote this address on a large manila envelope and placed inside a set of photographic negatives of Che's diary which he had had made some time earlier when the CIA gave him Che's diary. Inside the envelope he inserted a brief note to Fidel

Castro in which he said that he was a friend of the Cuban Revolution and that he was sending him a set of photographic negatives of Che Guevara's diary as a present. He said that Fidel could publish it whenever he pleased and that he did not want any financial compensation.

After he had mailed the diary, Arguedas informed President Barrientos of the disturbing present he had received from the CIA chief. He asked Barrientos to relieve him of his duties in order to avoid any further difficulties with the Americans. However, Barrientos refused to accept Arguedas' resignation and promised to look into the matter personally. The following day, Arguedas called the head of the CIA mission and demanded an explanation. On the phone, the CIA chief told him that it was all a "joke." The pistol was intended as a present, and the photographs were meant to be used as targets.

A little over two weeks after Arguedas had mailed his copy of Che's diary to Castro, the photographer who had been employed by Arguedas many months earlier to make a photographic copy of the diary came to him and said that he knew Arguedas was the one who had given Castro Che's diary. The photographer had just seen the Cuban edition of Che's diary, which contained photographs of several pages of the real diary, and he had recognized these illustrations as having been made from the negatives he had given Arguedas. Later the same day, Arguedas received an urgent telephone call from the CIA agent named García García, who said that he had some very important information to give Arguedas and told him to meet him immediately at a certain bridge in La Paz. However, Arguedas was suspicious. He concluded that the CIA had discovered he had given Castro his copy of Che's diary, and that they were now intent upon having him gunned down in the streets and placing the blame on leftist terrorists or one of the opposition parties. Since he had no intention of dying this way, he did the only thing left for him to do—he fled the country.

Arguedas, accompanied by his brother, escaped to Chile by driving a jeep overland across the *altiplano* to the Chilean border. There he asked the Chilean authorities for political asylum (Chile and Bolivia do not have diplomatic relations) and informed them that the CIA was intent upon eliminating him. The Chilean police immediately placed Arguedas under guard and took him to Santiago. However, much to Arguedas' surprise, he discovered that the Chilean police and the CIA were working hand in hand. In Santiago, he was questioned by a Chilean police official named Señor Zúñiga and a CIA agent named Nicolás Leondiris (one of the agents who had interrogated Arguedas in Lima four years earlier). According to Arguedas, Zúñiga told him that no one would believe his story about the CIA and that he could make a sizable fortune if he publicly accused General Ovando of having sold Che's diary to Cuba. Zúñiga also told Arguedas that there had been a coup d'état in Bolivia and that the new president was General Marcos Vásquez. (It is interesting that about a month later General Vásquez did make an unsuccessful attempt to seize power from Barrientos.) Unless Arguedas denounced Ovando, Zúñiga assured him that they would turn him over to General Vásquez, who would surely have him shot. However, Arguedas refused to believe that a coup d'état had taken place in Bolivia, and he refused to denounce anyone. He told Zúñiga and Leondiris that he was determined to follow Che Guevara's example and live by the truth.

Leondiris then told Arguedas that if he went ahead with his plans to expose the CIA's activities in Bolivia, the CIA would in fact engineer a coup d'état in Bolivia and see that his house and family were attacked. These threats frightened Arguedas, but he still refused to slander any of the Bolivian leaders. Instead, he made a deal with the CIA. In return for not exposing the CIA's activities in Bolivia, Arguedas exacted a guarantee from Leondiris that the CIA would take no action against his family or the

Bolivian government. Moreover, Arguedas also demanded that the CIA withdraw from Bolivia all of their agents, as well as the AID advisory personnel in the various ministries of the Bolivian government.

According to Arguedas, the CIA agents never had any intention of carrying out their end of the bargain, and he knew it. They were merely playing along with him until they could either buy him off, discredit him, or eliminate him. He, on the other hand, was playing for time and the opportunity to return to Bolivia. As for the Chileans, they wanted Arguedas to leave Chile as soon as possible. Zuniga told Arguedas that Chile needed American aid and that they were afraid to permit him to stay in Chile because he might explode at any moment and publicly accuse the Americans of all kinds of barbarities, thereby placing Chile in an embarrassing position vis-à-vis the U.S. Government. As a result, both Zuniga and Leondiris suggested to Arguedas that he go to either Cuba or France. Arguedas, however, knew that if he went to either of these countries, whatever he might later say about the CIA could easily be dismissed as anti-American propaganda. Therefore, he insisted on going to New York and finally got Leondiris to obtain a visa for him. Arguedas assumed that New York would be the safest place for him to go since the CIA would not dare assassinate him in the United States. Leondiris, on the other hand, made arrangements for himself and Arguedas to fly to New York via London, probably with the hope of persuading Arguedas to go from London to either France or Cuba.

Arguedas reached London escorted by Leondiris and a Chilean police agent named Oscar Pizarro. At London airport, they were isolated from the waiting reporters and television cameras and kept incommunicado for several hours by the British immigration authorities. According to Arguedas, he asked Leondiris why they were being detained and why, if their agreement was to go to New York, they could not simply take the next flight to New

York. At this point, Arguedas claims Leondiris told him that even the CIA had its problems. A short time later, a British official handed Arguedas a note in Spanish which stated that he had entered the country illegally and could stay for only three days. Then his passport was stamped and he and his two escorts were led to a taxi waiting outside. The taxi took the three of them to the Apollo Hotel, where they registered under their middle names rather than their surnames. Arguedas could not speak English and was completely disoriented. He knew something was up and decided to play the situation by ear. It was not long before Leondiris again approached him about going to France. He refused, fearing that he would have difficulty returning to Bolivia once he was in France and insisted that they take him to New York as originally planned. Meanwhile, there was increasing pressure from the House of Commons for Arguedas to be brought out of hiding and allowed to speak.

Leondiris was afraid Arguedas might tell the British public about the CIA's activities in Bolivia, in spite of the threats he had made earlier to keep Arguedas from talking in Chile. With both the British Foreign Office and the Cuban Embassy demanding to speak with Arguedas, Leondiris insisted that Arguedas give him proof that he could be trusted not to break their earlier agreement. Because Arguedas wanted to return to Bolivia, he assured Leondiris that he would carry out his end of the bargain. As proof of his good intentions, he told Leondiris where he had hidden a complete account of Che's death given to him by Sergeant Jaime Terán, the soldier chosen to kill Che. Once this was verified, Leondiris allowed Arguedas to speak by phone with the British Foreign Office and the Cuban and Bolivian embassies. To all three, Arguedas made it clear that he was irrevocably determined to return to Bolivia immediately in order to stand trial for his actions.

Although Arguedas wanted to return to Bolivia directly



from London, he claims the CIA prevailed upon him to go to New York first. Apparently, the CIA still believed they could persuade Arguedas to give up his plan to return to Bolivia. Arguedas encouraged them in this hope in order to keep them from taking drastic action against him. It is not clear what took place once Arguedas reached New York. He spent several days there and then managed to board a flight to Lima, Peru. Evidently, he must have deceived the CIA into believing he was going to stay in Lima or they would never have allowed him to go there. On the other hand, perhaps by this time the CIA was no longer terribly worried about what he might say. They had by this time withdrawn their advisers from the Bolivian Ministry of Internal Affairs and replaced all the CIA personnel in Bolivia known to Arguedas. Moreover, they had successfully planted a considerable amount of information in the Latin American press which depicted Arguedas as either a traitor or a madman. Thus, they probably assumed that anything Arguedas might say about the CIA's activities in Bolivia would be rejected by the general public as the lies of a disreputable politician. At any rate, Arguedas managed to reach Lima, and much to everyone's surprise he proceeded with his announced intention to return to Bolivia.

When Arguedas reached Lima, he says that he discovered for the first time what the CIA had been doing to blacken his image since his departure from Bolivia a month earlier. He found that the Latin American press was presenting him as an incoherent, half-crazy politician who had received a large sum of money from the Cuban government for Che's diary. Arguedas also learned from reading some Bolivian newspapers that the CIA had not fulfilled its part of the agreement. That is, he discovered that there had not been any withdrawal of the American advisory personnel in the various ministries of the Bolivian government. At this point, Arguedas apparently called a CIA contact in Lima and informed him that be-

cause the CIA had not fulfilled its agreement with him he therefore felt free to publicly expose its activities in his country. He then informed the Bolivian embassy and the press that he was returning to La Paz within the next few days. From this point on, Arguedas was under constant guard by the Peruvian police and was followed everywhere he went by a growing throng of reporters.

Shortly before his departure from Lima, Arguedas held a press conference in which he denied having received any compensation for giving Che's diary to the Cubans. He also denounced the CIA. He said that he had kept quiet until this point because he had made an agreement with the CIA in which they were to leave his country in return for his silence. He said that he had also demanded that all the American advisory personnel in Bolivia be withdrawn, and that in the future if the Americans wanted to aid the Bolivian government they should do so on a government-to-government basis. Since the CIA had failed to comply with these conditions, Arguedas told the reporters that he was determined to return to Bolivia and tell the truth about the CIA's involvement in Bolivian affairs.

When he arrived in Bolivia, Arguedas further elaborated on his reason for returning home. He claimed that he had returned in order to clear his conscience and face the consequences of his past actions. His exact words were: "I am not looking for publicity. I only want to tell the truth about everything that occurred in my career as secretary and minister of government, and alert not only the present government of Bolivia, but all the governments of Latin America, as to how North American imperialism undermines their intelligence services in order to introduce errors, to distort, to present a completely different picture of reality, to obstruct their economic relations with other states, and finally to keep them under its control." He said he had returned in order to regain his personal dignity by telling the truth at the moment when

it was most appropriate to do so. In this regard, he reminded the reporters of the fact that he had been the favorite of both the Americans and the most reactionary elements in the country prior to his sending Che's diary to Castro, and that he had given up a promising political career because of his disgust over the way in which American political and economic interests had undermined Bolivia's national sovereignty.

At the press conference following his return to Bolivia, Arguedas refuted the suggestion that he had given a copy of Che's diary to Castro because he was a Castroite. He denied being either a Castroite or a Communist and stated that he was a nationalist first and a Marxist second. With regard to the accusation that he had received a large sum of money for the diary, Arguedas angrily retorted that this was another of the CIA's insidious attempts to discredit him by slander. He argued that if it had been money he was after, it would have been unnecessary for him to sell Che's diary to the Cubans. Arguedas pointed out that as minister of internal affairs he could have made a fortune in bribes from the Americans if he had wanted to do so. He said he had documents hidden outside the country which, among other things, proved that an American engineering firm (which he named) had offered him a bribe of one and a half million dollars to see that they were awarded a government contract for the construction of two new highways. In other words, he argued that he had rejected bribes of much greater amounts than the five hundred thousand dollars it was rumored he had received from the Cubans.

When asked whether he was not afraid that the CIA would have him assassinated, Arguedas answered that if the CIA wanted to send some "patriot" to shoot him in his cell, they were welcome to do it. However, he said that he expected them to continue their efforts to discredit him, and that there was nothing that could be done to stop the machinery they had set in motion to do this. In

support of this assertion, he recounted how he had planted an article for the CIA in the Bolivian press which falsely reported that Tania had been a Soviet spy operating under orders to sabotage Che's guerrilla operation. He predicted that articles slandering him would continue to appear in the Latin American press. Nevertheless, he said that he was content with having told the truth even if no one believed him.

Arguedas expressed the opinion that among nearly all the political groups in Bolivia there was a growing awareness of the insidious role being played by the United States in the political and economic life of the country. Moreover, he said that the disgrace of Bolivia's dependence upon the United States was contributing to increasing anti-American feeling and that the moment would come when the national conscience would no longer tolerate American interference in Bolivia's internal affairs. In fact, he predicted that Latin America would turn into another Vietnam if American imperialism continued to manipulate the governments, officials, and institutions of the Latin American countries in accordance with its own selfish interests.

Several times during his discussions with the press, Arguedas expressed his faith in the young leaders of Bolivia's small Christian Democratic Party, whom he characterized as the hope of the country. He exhorted all Bolivians to listen to these young leaders and to unite behind them in defending Bolivia's national dignity and sovereignty. However, he made it quite clear that he was opposed to a forcible overthrow of the current regime. He said that coups lend themselves to CIA manipulation, and that the group which successfully brings off a coup usually ends up being more dependent upon the CIA than its predecessor. For this reason, he said that the only alternative was a general election administered by an impartial and autonomous commission composed of honest and respected civic leaders. But even this, according to Arguedas, was

no guarantee against CIA interference. He said the CIA had manipulated many elections in Latin America and that several CIA agents had even bragged to him about the CIA's influence over the national elections in the U.S. itself.

The Arguedas affair is one consequence of Che's guerrilla operation which Che himself never could have foreseen. Arguedas' actions shook the Barrientos regime more than did Che's guerrilla activities, which strengthened Bolivia's national unity. By calling into question the integrity of the government and the armed forces, Arguedas' actions weakened Bolivia's national unity and the public's confidence in the existing political system. Moreover, Arguedas' return to Bolivia and his revelations about the nature of the CIA's interference in Bolivian affairs have called into question the role of the United States in that country. In fact, the Arguedas affair should provoke Americans to ask some very serious questions about the nature of their country's involvement in the domestic affairs of the Latin America countries.

The significance of what Arguedas has said about the CIA's involvement in Bolivia and Latin America as a whole must be comprehended in terms of America's professed foreign policy goals of advancing democracy and democratic ideals throughout the world. If what Arguedas has said is true—and most informed Bolivians believe much if not all of what he has said—then it seems clear that the U.S. is not advancing democracy in Latin America, and that there is sufficient justification for labeling the United States an imperialist power. In fact, it would appear that the United States is helping Latin America's revolutionaries by providing them with a genuine focal point for popular discontent. However, the sordid picture which Arguedas has given of the CIA's Mafia-like intimidation, blackmail, and subversion of supposedly friendly governments is not one the average American will want to believe. To do so would require that he face the fact

that his country is not the great and noble force in the world that he imagines it to be.

Following his press conference in the Ministry of Internal Affairs the day of his return to Bolivia, Arguedas was placed in confinement and not allowed to make any further statements to the press. However, within a few months he was released from prison as a result of the Bolivian high court's decision that it did not have the authority to try him. According to the high court, the Bolivian legislature was the only body competent to try a former minister of state for acts of treason committed while in office. Due to the court's decision, Arguedas was released from prison pending action by the legislature. Within a short time after his release, several attempts were made on his life. Twice bombs were thrown at him, and on June 6, 1969, he and a Spanish journalist accompanying him were machinegunned while walking on the street in La Paz. Both Arguedas and the journalist escaped with minor wounds. However, Arguedas was hospitalized for almost a month, and following his release from the hospital, he immediately sought asylum in the Mexican embassy. In a statement which he gave to the press at the time, he explained that his intentions were to leave Bolivia and go to Mexico. He said that he had decided to leave the country because of the increasing political instability in Bolivia following the death of President Barrientos (who had just been killed in the crash of his personal helicopter) and due to the recent attempts upon his life. He gave as an additional reason the failure of the government to take any action whatsoever against the agents of American imperialism at work undermining Bolivia's national sovereignty. The circumstances surrounding Arguedas' flight and return to Bolivia are so bizarre that it would be foolish to try to predict what will happen to him next.