

Where Che Went: Pure Speculation

By Lewis H. Diuguid

OUT OF CAIRO last week came the report that Che Guevara had died at the side of Gaston Soumialot around Fizi in the eastern Congo. A day later Gaston turned up in Dar-es-Salaam to say "my presence speaks for itself." He described the rumors as an imperialist plot and added: "We do not know this Che Guevara. Perhaps he is a revolutionary like us, but he is not with us . . ."

No, clearly Che didn't meet his end in the Congo. If he had been there, Gaston would have noticed.

Indeed, since Premier Castro announced Guevara's departure for new battlefields the most credible related news has been that Argentine security forces were put on immediate alert. They'll stay that way, along with their counterparts elsewhere until a certified Che is laid on the marble.

The CIA apparently thinks that dead or alive, Che is still in Cuba. Earnest observers are just as inclined to believe another version: that he made the Dominican scene in a submarine. But the denouement to that tale supposedly was Che's death. And while his last verified appearance was in Havana on March 21, his followers just don't believe they've seen the last of this true Revolutionary of the Western World, this state shaker with style.

He is, as one author describes him, "intelligent, very brave, asthmatic and a Marxist—and, of course, bearded." He may lie low, but it will be in wait. And where will he turn up . . . and when . . . ?

IT'S JULY 26, 1984, and Field Marshal Fidel is on a goodwill tour of OAS nations. Still the cigar, still the fatigues. But they have epaulets now, with tassels. Still the beard, but rather a formal one, and he's taken to waxing the mustaches. They arc slightly at the tips.

Fidel preens in the dusty Guadalajara street, with just time enough for a trim at the *peluqueria* before he joins his sister to discuss rumors of leftist Cubans training in the Mexican bush for invasion of the island. There's even talk of the *New York Times* sending a reporter to interview the leader.

The Premier steps into the Gramma barbershop, settles in the chair and only notices the proprietor when he wheezes in the spare air. He's a striking man, clean-shaven, but with a faintly reminiscent sparkle to the eye, like the glint of the sun on his stropped razor. And of all things, the barber pulls a cap from his pocket and dons it. A

beret; it's Che! Miss Castro dines alone.

Or maybe a different setting . . . *The Washington Post* Book and Author Luncheon at its eclectic best, with the subject quite revolutionary. The table is set for four. Gen. Nasution argues as Gen. Giap quotes fondly from *People's War, People's Army*. And now the guest of honor, an indestructible Mao guided along by Gen. Sam Griffiths. But a swarthy waiter cuts in front of them with a platter. And under the glass, not fish of the sea—but a dog-eared powder-burned first edition of *Guerrilla Warfare*. Che signs the flyleaf with a flourish, and lights a cigar. The assemblage is affronted. Quite improper.

NO. CHE—who at 37 is an author, traveler, doctor and Communist; and former interior minister, major, Argentine, industries minister, Cuban and banker—surely will not go gentle into that good night. Still, there seems to be an omen if not an amen in his last letter.

"My only mistake of any seriousness," said his April 1 testament as read by Castro Oct. 3, "was not to have confided more in you since the Sierra Maestra, and not having sufficiently understood your qualities as director and as a revolutionary."

Che, Fidel, and brother Raul escaped to those Sierras after a quixotic attempt at invading Cuba in 1956. Later, in the march out of the wilderness and into power, Che and a Cuban called Camilo Cienfuegos led troop columns. But in October of 1959, Cienfuegos flew from Havana on an ostensible mission to the eastern provinces. He was never seen again.

Whatever Castro's attitude toward Major Cienfuegos, from then on his has been the only picture—besides Castro's—allowed on Cuban posters celebrating the abortive, symbolic coup of July 26, 1953. But just before this year's ceremonies, on July 11, Reuters reported that the posters had gone up—picturing Guevara as well.

Then in his July 26 speech Castro called specific attention to Che and to Cienfuegos—as their posters stared down benignly—and their "heroic feats."

Unusual, the similarities between the first and the last among the original guerrillas seemingly to fall out with the Castro brothers. But then, unusual did Che live. And thus, forgive the phrase, the importance of seeing Ernesto.