

Castro Sent Che on Bolivia Venture

By Drew Pearson
and Jack Anderson

The celebrated diary of Ernesto "Che" Guevara, the slain Communist idol, wasn't the only intimate document that Bolivian troops captured when they wiped out his rag-tag guerrilla band.

They also picked up several other revealing mementos, including personal messages to Cuban dictator Fidel Castro, an extortion letter to Gulf Oil, and a touching human letter to his 11-year-old daughter, Hilda.

Bolivian authorities turned copies of these documents over to the Central Intelligence Agency, which promptly classified them "top secret." A CIA agent was also permitted to interrogate Guevara before he was executed.

We can now publish highlights from these documents, which prove conclusively that Castro sent Guevara's guerrillas to wage war upon Bolivia. The legendary Che was accompanied by 17 Cuban officers, including seven "commandantes," or generals. Their mission was to seize control of Bolivia and use it as a base in the heart of South America to subvert the entire continent. Castro's secret messages to Guevara told of Cuban payments of more than \$200,000 to a Chinese revolutionary named Juan Chang to open "a second front" in Peru.

Castro's Code Name

Guevara and Castro kept in

touch with one another through couriers and underground radio.

The first messages were bright with optimism.

"Our activities here are so far on schedule, according to the over-all plan . . ." began a typical Che communication. "Looks like it will be hard but beautiful."

Another: "Four of us are in the safe house, and it seems the rest will get in without difficulty . . . The best travel document for them is the tourist card. I will get some and send them to you by courier. This is better than trying to print counterfeit ones, because the numbers might coincide."

Loyal Bolivians

Bolivia's Communist chief, Mario Monje Molino, who was supposed to aid Guevara, turned out to be more loyal to Moscow's peaceful coexistence policy than to Castro's Chinese brand of communism.

Che radioed Havana bitterly: "Estanislao (Monje's code name) has become an enemy. He has managed to sidetrack the last three men you sent. Instead, he has tried to infiltrate one of his own men here . . . His letter to you is in bad faith. As a result of his hostile attitude, I shall have to set out on our first march with only 11 Bolivian recruits."

Castro tried to cheer up his

revolutionary comrade with accounts of his talks with Bolivian leftists. He reported that Juan Lechin, head of the Bolivian tin miners, "showed great enthusiasm and asked for money and training facilities."

Indeed, it developed that Castro's Bolivian contacts were more interested in money than in revolution.

Castro was never able to mount a second front, but he did persuade the Bertrand Russell Foundation to issue a worldwide manifesto supporting the alleged Bolivian "revolution." The Foundation, however insisted that Guevara's name be used.

"By all means use my name," replied Che, "if that is expected to be helpful."

In a melancholy mood, the twice-married Guevara scratched a letter to Hilda, his only daughter by his first wife, on her 11th birthday.

"Beloved Hildita," wrote Che, "I want to write you a letter today, although I know you won't get it till much later . . ."

"You are almost a woman now, one cannot write you the way one does to children, full of silly stuff and little lies. You must know I am far from you, and I will remain away for a very long time, doing what I can to fight against our enemies. It isn't much, but I'm doing something, and I think you will always be proud of your father, the way I am proud of you.

"Remember, there are many years of struggle ahead, and when you become a woman you must do your part in it. In the meantime, you must prepare yourself. Be a good revolutionary, which at your age means study all you can, and be always on the side of good causes. And it also means minding your mother and not putting on airs."

Near the end, after Guevara's pipeline with Havana was cut off and he ran out of Communist money, he wrote another sort of letter to John J. Wilson, manager of a Gulf Oil drilling camp, demanding money.

"Since we know," Che wrote, "that this year Gulf will gross \$1 million from Bolivian oil, we consider it necessary that you deliver the sum of \$100,000 to the people's revolution represented by our army. With this money you will not only contribute to the needs of our troops and the peasant population of our zone, you will also contribute to maintaining your own pipeline, whose safety cannot be guaranteed any other way, given the growing, indestructible force of our movement . . . You can send us the money with the bearer of this letter, in banknotes no bigger than \$100."

Wilson sent no money. Not long afterward, in October 1967, Bolivian soldiers arrived with bullets instead of banknotes.

© 1968, Bell-McClure Syndicate, Inc.