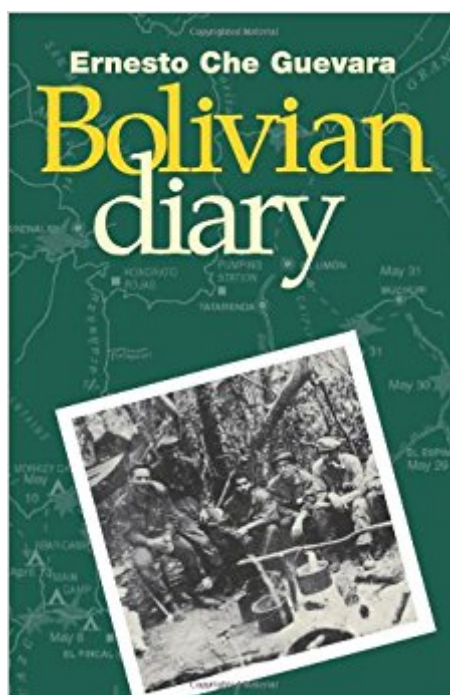


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The Bolivian Diary Of Ernesto Che Guevara



Synopsis

Guevara's day-by-day chronicle of the 1966-67 guerrilla campaign in Bolivia, an effort to forge a continent-wide revolutionary movement of workers and peasants and open the road to socialist revolution in South America. Includes excerpts from the diaries and accounts of other combatants, including -- for the first time in English -- My Campaign with Che by Bolivian leader Inti Peredo. Introduction by Mary-Alice Waters. An edition of Che Guevara's Bolivian Diary is also available in Spanish.

Book Information

Paperback: 467 pages

Publisher: Pathfinder Press (NY) (January 1, 1994)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0873487664

ISBN-13: 978-0873487665

Product Dimensions: 8.3 x 5.3 x 1 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.2 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars 14 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,179,216 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #61 in Books > History >

Americas > South America > Bolivia #361 in Books > History > Americas > Caribbean & West

Indies > Cuba #538 in Books > Biographies & Memoirs > Historical > Latin America

Customer Reviews

"Selected for inclusion in Significant Books of the Last 75 Years." --Foreign Affairs
Waters meticulously edited pair of volumes [Episodes of the Cuban Revolutionary War and The Bolivian Diary] is now the best original source for English-speaking scholars. Her attention to detail and her precision do not overcome the rough eloquence that was Guevara's style; the transcendental message of a new moral order bites through the prose with deceptive simplicity. --Hispanic American Historical Review, November 1996
"Pathfinder Press in publishing Che Guevara's Bolivian Diary has performed a major service for a new generation of activists and scholars. The Diary provides major insights on issues of democratic politics, transformative leadership and the ethics of revolutionary practitioners." --Letter from James Petras, October 1994

Text: English, Spanish (translation) --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

These taciturn notes taken during the Bolivian guerilla campaign were clearly intended for Che's own use and not for publication. They reveal much more about the man and his motives than even the definitive Jon Lee Anderson biography. Whatever his possible ideological shortcomings, Che Guevara is shown to be insightful, intelligent, determined, dignified, disciplined, devoted, slightly detached and absolutely dedicated to the cause of peasant liberation from the oppressive military dictatorships governing Latin America and (unfortunately) serving the pecuniary and strategic interests of the United States as well as satisfying their own avarice. Additional commentary bracketing the very short diary is provided by fellow combatants. Newly translated and restored sections and a helpful chronology and comprehensive roster of participants define this edition. The apparently endless Bolivian expedition (actually, it was slightly less than a year, beginning March and effectively ending with Che's capture and execution following the Yuro Ravine battle on October 8, 1968) is reminiscent of the travels and travails in the of Spanish conquistadore, Lope de Aguirre in the middle 1500s. Aguirre, as depicted in Werner Herzog's "Aguirre, the Wrath of God" was in quest of El Dorado. As with Aguirre's plagued expedition, attrition of the very small force under Che's command (from drownings, battle wounds, nagging hunger and intermittent malnutrition, parasites and deaths) eventually cast a nearly surreal aspect on the revolutionary group. Of course, neither Aguirre nor Che found any sort of El Dorado: just misery and death. Che's succinct diary entries and brief comments from some of the 8 survivors, provide a brisk and effective antidote to any romance associated with rural guerilla life. The most complete supplemental information is from Inti Peredo's diary, written while on the run and in hiding in La Paz (he was later killed by the Bolivian military) confirm the generally favorable impressions of Che, both as a man and as a revolutionary. Peredo, along with other members of the guerilla contingent, suffered mightily. Therefore, if anything, one would expect his comments to be highly critical: far from it. The major shortcoming of the book is the failure of the editors to provide context. The diary notes reveal little (if anything) about Che's strategy and I was baffled by his tactics. Sometimes, the arduous wanderings through the Bolivian backwoods seemed counter-intuitive from both a military and political perspective. Apparently, very little interaction with the peasantry occurred and that which did often seemed to go awry. Thwarted assumptions regarding the revolutionary potential of the benighted peasants fail to douse Che's boundless faith in the "anti-Imperialist" class. Betrayals by the Bolivian Communist Party and captured guerillas fail to damp Che's spirit. Really, its hard to believe. "The Bolivian Diary" can be considered a "stand alone" book, but it is best read in conjunction with Anderson's biography and, most especially, Che's lucid and well-written "The African Dream" (the

Congolese campaign). As Peredo reports, "People often join a guerilla force with little political education, motivated by epic exploits, heroic episodes, or simply by political-military intuition. This leads to a false idealization of the struggle and the life of a guerilla. Such a phenomenon is felt especially strongly among university students." Given the ongoing adulation of Che, the "romantic revolutionary", apparently this is true. "Bolivian Diary" should be an effective antidote to at least that aspect of Che's legacy.

Great book

Excellent read to follow up on the Motorcycle Dairy.

In November 1966, Ernesto Che Guevara and a few comrades took to the jungles of Bolivia to recreate the revolution which he helped to lead in Cuba. This diary narrates a years effort by Che and his band and to survive in a truly hostile territory. There is no revolutionary doctrine here. The story is one of a daily struggle for food, water, shelter and security. As the months pass, the struggle becomes even more difficult as Che fails to win the support of the peasants and faces a more capable Bolivian military. Che's leadership in the face of mounting difficulties is extraordinary. Che remains focused on the big picture and the long term goal, even when they dont know when they will eat again. The diary shows Che as a true revolutionary and visionary, without resorting to propaganda. While Che's leadership is exemplary, his judgement is catastrophic. He is an expert on revolutionary doctrine, but in going to Bolivia he ignores his own advice. Bolivia is not fertile ground for insurrection. The people are not eager to hear his message. The terrain is extraordinarily difficult. He and his band are, in effect, on their own from the day they arrive. Finally, how could a man dependent on asthma medication hope to live for months or years in the wilds of rural Bolivia ? If Che harboed doubts about his decision, he kept them out of the diary.

Che went to Bolivia because he (and the Cuban leadership) thought that the situation was ripe for revolution. It tells the story of how he built a cadre of fighters with dedicated youth who wanted to fight until freedom or die. He wrote this diary in the mountains, fighting the Bolivian army as well as hunger and asthma. Despite everything, he was always focused on the goal, not his own pain or suffering. He was constantly evaluating their situation, politically and militarily, and determining the next move. I first read Che's diary in the early 1970s because I wanted to learn more about him. At the time I thought it was interesting, but it didn't make much sense to me. This new edition is far

superior to the Ramparts edition I read back then. The Pathfinder editors went to Cuba to collect photos and maps to make the diary come to life. This book includes accounts by surviving guerillas who fought with Che in Bolivia. There is a chronology and a glossary so you can understand who everyone was, where they came from, and what happened to them. If you want to read this famous book, make sure to read this edition!

If you read this book, THIS edition, you will begin to know the real Che-- who gave his life building an embryo of the kind of leadership required to rid the world of Yankee Imperial domination and military dictators. Bolivians, Argentines, Peruvians, and Cubans fought side by side, changing themselves as they fought, with food and water and ammo and BOOKS in their knapsacks. Studying indigenous languages, among other things--- with the full support of Fidel Castro and the Cuban government. And they fought to take the heat off brutalized, heroic Vietnam, even just a little. They were defeated in combat, but victorious in the example they set : "the highest form of the human species" , yes they were. To defeat this monster in the USA, working people will have to emulate these men and women. Not in the mountains, but on strike picketlines, street demonstrations, studying together, as we fight the Imperial march towards Depression, fascism, and war. Excellent introduction points to struggles in Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, afterward : now it begins again...

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