

The Face of Persuasion

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The Psychology of Persuasion

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When a face alone is identified with a philosophy, dogma, or movement, it can be assumed that the person behind that face, whether his or her position is right or wrong, just or unjust, must be a master at influence and persuasion. Although there are hundreds of people throughout human history who have had great influence over others, the number of those recognized and associated with their particular points of view by the average person is only a small fraction. Christ, Buddha, Napoleon, Washington, Lincoln, Gandhi, Lenin, Hitler, Churchill, Mao, King, Malcolm X, Osama bin Ladin— these faces are readily recognized and immediately identified with the causes in which they believed. Another face must certainly be added to that roster. Che Guevara's famous candid portrait taken in Cuba during a public appearance was, at one time, perhaps the most reproduced and displayed image worldwide of a political figure. Instantly associated with the call to rout the influence of imperialism from developing countries, and the violent overthrow of the capitalist "establishment," Guevara's countenance became an icon for radical, left-wing, populist movements around the world.

How did a member of the Argentine oligarchy, born into relative privilege, and trained as a doctor end up as an icon for the overthrow of imperialism? And how did this intellectual evolve from an aloof and detached observer of South American society to one of the most zealous proponents of Marxism? The answer lies, at least in part, in understanding the psychology of persuasion; in identifying those mechanisms that affected Guevara and helped to transform him into the person he became, as well as those persuasive strategies he used— both consciously and instinctively— to win others over to

his way of thinking and, ultimately, follow him to their deaths. Understanding the forces that shaped Guevara's social and political attitudes requires a retrospective study of his family life, the neighborhood in which he grew up, his experiences and the socio-political and economic climate in which he lived. Within the field of social psychology, the term attitude is defined as "an enduring evaluation—positive or negative— of people, objects and ideas" (Aronson, Wilson and Akert 228). I will begin by identifying the various factors of influence throughout the formative years of Guevara's political awakening and demonstrate how affective, cognitive, and behavioral components of attitude development all came into play as he eventually adopted the position that violent revolution was the only viable solution in the elimination of strife and injustice that he observed in various South American countries. I will then discuss how, in the struggle to liberate Cuba from the Batista dictatorship, Guevara used well defined persuasive techniques to motivate others to follow his prescribed path. Finally, I will use this same frame of reference to analyze why he failed in his attempt to repeat his successful guerilla campaign in the mountain jungles of Bolivia.

Che was born Ernesto Guevara in 1928, son of an upper class, old-money, young couple in Buenos Aires, Argentina. His father had squandered his inheritance and was well on his way to depleting Ernesto's mother's in various unsuccessful business ventures. They lived in a time of political turmoil in Argentina in which the conservative oligarchy and the liberal socialist movement were in a struggle for dominance. Che's parents were left of center in their political convictions, his mother more liberal than his father. His mother was an avid reader and a passionate conversationalist. Their house was often filled with the voices of friends and neighbors in heated political and philosophical

discussion. Living in the same neighborhood, and frequent participants in these lively exchanges were exiled Spaniards who had left their homeland in response to the defeat of the socialist Republican government by the fascist Franco regime. It was in this environment, through a cognitive evaluation of the things he heard, that the young Ernesto most likely developed a latent propensity for the socialist ideology, which would later surface in a vibrant, red passion.

Guevara was afflicted with severe asthma for his entire life. As a child, it prohibited him from participating in sports and alienated him from the majority of his classmates. It also imposed restrictions on his ability to move about freely. Although in time, he would choose to suffer the suffocating symptoms rather than curtail his travels and exploits, his early experiences of infirmity provided him with a great appreciation for freedom and a hatred of any restrictions of it. Aronson, Wilson and Akert cite three different types of attitudes arrived at through different processes (301). A cognitively based attitude is the result of a conscious process of evaluation and the establishment of certain beliefs toward the attitude object. An affectively based attitude has been influenced by a person's feelings and emotions. Finally, a behaviorally based attitude is the product of the behavior one exhibits in response to a given attitude object. Che's personal experience of suffocating, chronic asthma attacks, from an affective as well as a behavioral perspective, may have served in the development of his empathy for the socially and economically disenfranchised populations of Latin America with whom he would soon become familiar. The stifling economic oppression, experienced by these disadvantaged people must have struck a familiar cord deep inside Guevara's psyche.

During his seasonal breaks from school, Guevara would travel and, capitalizing on his status as a medical student, would volunteer his services at clinics and hospitals in exchange for room and board. It was during these relatively brief sojourns that Che might have experienced his first significant *cognitive dissonance*. Advanced as a theory by social psychologist Leon Festinger in 1957, cognitive dissonance states that discrepancies between one's actions and one's positive self-image can lead to an uneasiness that must somehow be rectified (Pratkanis, Aronson 43). If rationalization is unsuccessful, then behavior must be modified before the dissonance may be relieved. After treating an old and dying servant woman in the Chilean port city of Valparaiso, Che was deeply affected by her hopelessness and poverty and wrote in his journal:

“There, in the final moments of people whose farthest horizon is tomorrow, one sees the tragedy that enfolds the lives of the proletariat throughout the whole world; in those dying eyes there is a submissive apology and also, frequently, a desperate plea for consolation that is lost in the void, just as their body will soon be lost in the magnitude of misery surrounding us. How long this order of things based on an absurd sense of caste will continue is not within my means to answer, but it is time that those who govern dedicate less time to propagandizing the compassion of their regimes and more money, much more money, sponsoring work for social utility” (Anderson 76).

The suffering of others less fortunate than himself created in Guevara feelings of guilt. Although in the entry cited above, Che rationalizes “those who govern” as the culprit, his inherited position in a social strata traditionally aligned with those in power could not

have been easily rationalized or ignored. From that point on, his journal entries were less self-absorbed and more concerned with social and political reform.

Guevara was greatly influenced by Juan Peron, who had wrested rule away from the right-wing regime in Argentina and who instituted many socialist reforms. As an avid reader, Che had also embraced much of the ideology of Nehru, who wrote in *The Discovery of India*, “In the context of the modern world, no country can be politically and economically independent, even within the framework of international interdependence, unless it is highly industrialized and has developed its power resources to the utmost” (Anderson 51). Both Peron and Nehru advocated economic independence from imperialist powers— for India, it had been England, for Argentina, the United States— and prescribed rapid industrialization as a means to achieve it. As Guevara’s experiences accumulated, he began to understand the significance of this line of thinking and incorporated it into his own consciousness.

Guevara continued to travel as his academic schedule permitted and with each new experience, he was exposed to an ever-increasing litany of examples of economic inequalities and social injustice. During one trip, he was asked what he had observed on his journeys. With some introspection, he realized that his attention was not attracted by the usual tourist destinations, which he referred to as a “luxurious façade.” He claimed that a country’s “true soul is reflected in the sick of the hospitals, the detainees in the police stations or the anxious passersby one gets to know, as the Rio Grande shows the turbulence of its swollen level from underneath” (Anderson 63). It is also in the shadows of the back alleys that the disenfranchised and discontent congregate and commiserate. In these shadows, Guevara began to see the futility in trying to bring about change within a

corrupt system that had its birth in colonialism. He couldn't help but notice the stark differences between the opulent foreign business managers from corporations such as the United Fruit Company and their exploited native workers. The seeds of Che's obsessive hatred for the United States were sown in those early days and, as Anderson notes, perhaps foreshadowed in his reference to the Rio Grande as a metaphoric division between the haves and have-nots (61).

In 1953, Guevara, like many other discontented Latin American spirits of the time, gravitated to Guatemala, which was in the midst of a "socialist experiment" under the administration of President Arbenze. Having instituted many reforms that promised to equalize some of the disparity between the classes, as well as threaten the profitability of various U.S. interests and investments, the Arbenze administration had attracted the attention of the United States' State Department. Ever weary of left-leaning governments, especially within the Western Hemisphere, the U. S. Administration enlisted the services of the CIA, who in time overthrew the freely elected Guatemalan government in exchange for a regime that was more suited to the economic interests of the United States. In the aftermath, Guevara had what he later referred to as a "revelation." In a journal entitled, *Notas de Viaje* (Notes of Trip), he delineates his mission for the rest of his life and uncannily predicts his own death and the iconization of his image:

"...I will be with the people, and I know it because I see it etched in the night that I, the eclectic dissector of doctrines and psychoanalyst of dogmas, howling like one possessed, will assault the barricades or trenches, will bathe my weapon in blood and, mad with fury, will slit the throat of any enemy who falls into my hands...and I see as if an enormous

tiredness shoots down my recent exaltation, how I die as a sacrifice to the true standardizing revolution of wills, pronouncing the exemplary mea culpa. And I feel my nostrils dilated, tasting the acrid smell of gun powder and of blood, of dead enemy; now my body contorts, ready for the fight, and I prepare my being as if it were a sacred place so that in it the bestial howling of the triumphant proletariat can resonate with new vibrations and new hopes.” (123)

Guevara’s course was set. He may have been influenced by the conversations of his parents and their exiled socialist friends from Republican Spain. Nehru, Peron, Marx, and Mao may have pointed toward the left-hand fork in the road. But it was his first-hand experiences that provided the strongest influence. In a letter to his mother, he wrote of his decision to become a Communist, “[the decision] is reached by two roads: positively, by being directly convinced, or negatively, after a deception with everything. I reached it by the second route only to immediately be convinced that one has to follow the first” (165). Interestingly, Che’s metaphorical use of a journey to describe his philosophical evolution is similar to how psychologists describe the basic process of persuasion. The central *route*, according to Pratkanis and Aronson, is based on an intellectual thought process, while, in contrast, the peripheral route is emotional in nature. Che carefully evaluated what he saw and what he experienced. He studied the facts and learned from the opinions of others considered experts in their fields. Personal experience and first-hand observation told him that in the shadow of the giant imperialist power of the United States, social and political change for the benefit of the proletariat was all but impossible



through peaceful means. The alternative was violence. Che was ready. All he needed was a cause. He found it in Mexico when he was introduced to a man named Fidel.

After the CIA-backed overthrow of the Guatemalan Arbenze administration, Guevara found his way to Mexico City. There, he rekindled relationships with various other wanderers and leftist intellectuals he had met and befriended throughout his travels. Among these were a group of Cubans, who were living in exile as part of a fledgling political party in opposition to the ruling Batista dictatorship. Having recently been released by Batista from prison in a propagandistic show of magnanimity, Fidel Castro, the leader of a foiled attempt to storm a military barracks in Moncado, Cuba, and head of this party, arrived in Mexico to begin the assembly of a guerilla army with which to resume his assault against the Batista regime.

Che was immediately impressed with Castro's vision and soon became an ardent member of his revolutionary movement. Having enlisted as the rebel forces' doctor, Che trained rigorously with the other recruits and, despite his asthma, he attacked his training with great enthusiasm and zeal. He expected and accepted no special treatment from his comrades in consideration of his affliction and, as a result won great respect among them and admiration from Fidel. Eventually, the recruits were asked to evaluate the performance of their comrades and unanimously— and in spite of his foreign status—voted for Che for a position of leadership.

Ideologically, Che was uncompromising. He strongly defended and upheld the revolutionary values for which he had pledged his life. Upon meeting the wife of one of Fidel's Cuban associates, Che was quick to admonish her for wearing too much jewelry.

Guevara told her, “Real revolutionaries adorn themselves on the inside, not on the surface” (185). However offended she might have been at the time, this opinion softened when, as time passed, it became obvious that Che was “equally tough on himself” (185). This trait of strict adherence to conviction became legendary once the rebel forces landed on the shores of Fidel’s homeland. As the band of guerillas began to operate in the Sierra Maestra, discipline was essential. The hardships of day-to-day life in the jungle, in conjunction with the real-life, day-to-day threat of the pursuing Government forces created great stress among the rebel troops. Desertions and betrayals could spell defeat for the fledgling army and Che was vigilant in discouraging “counter-revolutionary” activities among the men.

Upon capture of a recent deserter named Eutimio Guerra, and armed with conclusive evidence of his collusion with Government troops, Fidel issued a death sentence. In the presence of the full complement of rebel troops, one of the officers “inflicted a heartfelt sermon on him” (237) as the accused knelt, head bowed. As a storm suddenly broke and a torrent ensued, Fidel retreated for shelter and the others stood uncomfortably as the rain fell, looking at the condemned man and then to each other. Che simply stepped toward the deserter, placed the gun to Guerra’s head, and pulled the trigger. “From then on, he acquired a reputation for a cold-blooded willingness to take direct action against transgressors of the revolutionary norms” (238). This reputation was tempered with the acknowledgement that Guevara could also be sympathetic and judicious. In another incident, a comrade had accidentally fired his weapon, risking detection by Government troops. Furious, Fidel ordered the offending rebel shot. Che

took the lead, and along with others, was quick to come to the young guerilla's defense and convinced Fidel to reduce the sentence.

Che developed the reputation of a strict but fair leader, and those who fought with him were well aware that he demanded no less of himself than he did of those he lead. He was promoted to commander of the 2<sup>nd</sup> column (referred to as the 4<sup>th</sup> for propaganda purposes) and fought along side— and often in front of— his men, much to the frustration of Fidel, who often chastised him for habitually putting himself in harm's way. His promotion was not unanimously supported and some members of the movement not actively taking part in the guerilla fighting made their feelings known with respect to having an “outsider” occupy such a high place of prominence within the revolution. In an interview with an Argentine journalist, Che defended his position by saying,

“...I consider my fatherland to be not only Argentina, but all of America...I cannot conceive that it can be called interference to give myself personally, to give myself completely, to offer my blood for a cause I consider just and popular, to help a people liberate themselves from tyranny” (309).

Even before the success of Fidel's revolution, Che was responsible for instituting agrarian reform within the rebel-held territory, building an arms factory, the first bread factory in the mountains, and establishing a hospital and a school. Guevara, “the outsider” was determined to prove his value to the revolution and to the Cuban people.

Why was Che so effective as a guerilla leader? How is it that a foreigner could have so completely won the respect of his leader and the obedience of his comrades? First, one must consider what makes a successful leader. Guevara was able to command

respect and obedience because he employed many of the techniques cited in Pratkanis and Aronson's four stratagems of influence.

Pre-persuasion, the authors' first stratagem, is defined as the actions taken to set the stage before persuasion takes place. Employment of a well-crafted argument that channels a desired cognitive response may require the use of glittering generalities, and invented and segmentary labels. These are "words of influence" (71) and are used to build a case that's slanted in the direction of the persuader. Using an "invented label" such as "puppets of the imperialist gringos" to refer to the Batista forces may or may not have had the desired affect on Guevara's target audience. The initial band of rebels was, for the most part, educated and aware of the political climate at the time. But as the guerilla army grew in numbers, it drew its strength from the peasant population of the mountainous region in which they were fighting. For these isolated people, a crash course in anti-imperialism would have been required. Anecdotal generalities regarding the treatment of the peasants by the ruling class and the introduction of an "us versus them" sentiment would begin to cultivate a spirit of unity and loyalty within the ranks.

Once an individual decided to sign on as a guerilla, Che's influence strategy shifted from pre-persuasion. In an effort to convince his troops to comply with his orders—which frequently included almost suicidal acts against the enemy—Guevara implemented various tactics that are classified under the second of Pratkanis and Aronson's stratagems, Communicator Credibility. A communicator must exhibit credibility if he is to successfully persuade his target audience. Che trained right along side many of the guerillas he eventually led. What made him any more of an expert in combat and strategy than his other comrades? Although he was highly educated and well

read, he lacked the experience of battle and any formal training in military strategy. His men did, however, have frequent opportunity to see him perform under pressure. In battle, Che exhibited a great deal of confidence and courage. He led by example and did not appear to lead for any other reason than to achieve the specified objective.

To ensure that his comrades remained loyal, Che implemented the third stratagem by paying special attention to the message and how it was delivered. One could say that the experience of seeing a fellow rebel executed for his transgressions against the revolution was perhaps the most extreme example of the use of a vivid appeal. As defined by Pratkanis and Aronson, a vivid appeal is,

“...a message that is (1) emotionally interesting (it attracts our feelings), (2) concrete and imagery-provoking, and (3) immediate (it discusses matters that are personally close to us)” (171).

Needless to say, Guevara’s brutal dispensation of revolutionary justice attracted some very intense feelings, provoked strong imagery, and touched on matters personally close to his comrades.

Finally, Guevara used an emotional appeal—the fourth stratagem—to solicit and maintain the loyalty of his comrades. To those who lived up to his enormous expectations, Che exhibited a great warmth, respect and affection. To be part of Che’s inner circle was a source of pride. It garnered no additional perks or preferential treatment, no extra rations or better weaponry. But it did provide its members with a direct link to the decision making process. Che’s inner circle would follow him throughout the civil war, throughout his involvement in Castro’s government, and for some, ultimately, to their death.

Although skilled use of persuasive techniques —either instinctive or intentional— counts for a great deal of Guevara’s success as a leader, one must also take into account the character and situation of those being influenced. It is beneficial to consider, for a moment, Che’s guerillas, their state of mind and the situation in which they found themselves, and to examine various types of conformity, when and why each type comes into play, and which apply to this study. Aronson, Wilson and Akert define conformity as “a change in behavior due to the real or imagined influence of other people” (245). In *Social Psychology: The Heart and the Mind*, they describe different situations in which one is apt to conform to the behavior of another and why. One example, called Informational Conformity, occurs when individuals find themselves in a new or foreign situation and in need of guidance with respect to how to react. Unfamiliar with the situation, they will look to another for a cue. Considering that Guevara naturally projected an air of confidence and competence, it is understandable that, in a crisis situation, after a brief assessment of the possible role models, most of those unsure would look to Che as an example.

Another catalyst of conformity is Normative Social Influence. The human need to be accepted into a group is realized by conforming to that group’s social norms. Thus, Normative Conformity occurs when one attempts to adopt a prescribed behavior in order to be part of the group. In the jungle, one lives or dies depending on the support of the group. As the Eutimio Guerra incident proved, nonconformity could be extremely detrimental to one’s well being. “Desertion, insubordination, and defeatism” (Anderson 241) were offenses against the social norms of the guerilla force. Compliance was

achieved by assuring that all members witnessed, first hand, the execution of nonconformists.

Aronson, Wilson, and Akert discuss the theory of obedience to authority in *Social Psychology* and describe a particular experiment conducted by Stanley Milgram. In 1974, he attempted to understand why an individual could be influenced to inflict pain on another innocent person. In this experiment, the subject was convinced that he was delivering shocks of varying degrees to another person as punishment for providing an incorrect answer to a series of questions. Although an alarming number of subjects could be persuaded to deliver what appeared to be an extremely painful amount of electricity to the seemingly unfortunate recipient, one important component was necessary or compliance was less certain. When the subject did not have confidence in the person in command of the experiment, when it was apparent that he “lacked expertise, people were much less likely to use him as a source of information about how they should respond” (279). Compliance dropped from 65 percent to only 20 percent. This experiment is a clear demonstration of Informational Compliance in action.

In the jungles of Cuba, the vast majority of guerillas fighting under Che were willing to forgo the relative comforts of civilization for extended periods of time, to attack heavily fortified military targets that possessed superior firepower and fighting forces that outnumbered the rebels, and to adhere to a strict code of military justice with the understanding that even a minor infraction would be met with a death sentence. Why? Because Guevara’s self-confidence, competence, and charisma clearly gave him the air of an “expert.” For the majority of the guerilla fighters, compliance and conformity was assured.

Once victory was achieved, Che's work was far from finished. With the surrender of the Batista regime, there was a vacuum to be filled and Castro and his victorious forces were there to fill it. Although Fidel was happy at first to let another take the lead as president, it was not long before it was obvious who was calling the shots. Soon, with the resignation of Prime Minister Miro Cardona, Castro was appointed as his replacement. As part of the deal, Fidel demanded special powers to "direct governmental policy." In addition, "a law was issued lowering the minimum age for holding high public office from thirty-five to thirty; now, both Che and Fidel, still only thirty and thirty-two, respectively, were eligible for ministerial posts" (397). Equipped with this official legitimacy, and, under the orders of Fidel, Che immediately began the task of purging the military of its Batista loyalists. With the same cold-blooded dispensation of "revolutionary justice," he exhibited in the Sierra Miestra; Che attacked his new responsibilities with a vengeance. That is not to say he was absolute in his policy. Anderson writes, "...far from being sectarian, [Guevara] dealt respectfully with many of the defeated former army officers at La Cabana during the transition to rebel army control— even as he sent others to die before the firing squad" (412). In fact, in the case of a former army typist named Manresa, Che requested the young soldier to stay on as his personal secretary. This act of faith and compassion earned Guevara Manresa's undying gratitude. He stayed with Che throughout his tenure in Cuba and would have accompanied him to Bolivia where Guevara met his demise, had it not been for a debilitating physical ailment.



Stories abound of the fierce loyalty Che's troops felt toward their jefe as well as that of his friend and mentor, Fidel Castro. In fact, Fidel afforded Guevara far more leeway with respect to independence than his other ministers. For all the same reasons that served him so well in battle, Che continued to command the respect and loyalty of his comrades. Thus, informational compliance and normative social influence, along with Pratkanis and Aronson's four stratagems of influence proved effective in post-war Cuba as well as in battle. In fact, through his astute powers of influence, Che was able to move the revolution in a decidedly Marxist direction. As Fidel adopted a Communist philosophy, Che spent a great deal of time speaking with those rebels closest to him. It gradually became apparent to these subordinates that they were now taking part in a Communist revolution. One of Fidel's top officials remembers,

“...We wanted a revolution that was just, that was honorable, that would serve the interests of the nation and all of that, but would have nothing to do with Communism. We discussed this between ourselves. But we also said, ‘Well, if Che and Fidel are Communists, then we are too.’ But it was out of a sense of devotion to them, not because of any ideological position” (Anderson 410).

Che and Fidel had created their own “granfalloon.” A term coined by Kurt Vonnegut, a granfalloon is a select group, which may be easily influenced and manipulated by its leaders. Also described as the minimum group paradigm, it provides the propagandist with a common frame of reference— real or fabricated— from which to communicate with his target audience. “What the propagandist is really saying is ‘you are on my side (never mind that I created the teams); now act like it and do as we say” (Pratkanis and

Aronson 216). Many of those who fought along side Fidel and Che were ardent anti-communists but when their leaders “suggested” they get in line, they did so willingly and with great zeal and enthusiasm. Those few that didn’t fled to exile or were arrested, accused of counter-revolution and jailed or executed.

As the task of governing became more systematic, Che was assigned various positions. He approached each with the same level of dedication and enthusiasm that had become his trademark. Much of his success was due, in part, to his loyal subordinates, who executed his orders without question. His numerous duties didn’t inhibit his writing, however, which he had done continuously since first setting out on his motorcycle journeys as a young medical student. Guevara spent a great deal of time deconstructing the revolution and analyzing its success in an effort to determine how to export it to other developing countries in Latin America. In his book, *Guerilla Warfare*, he stresses the importance of having the people on the side of the fighters:

“The guerilla fighter needs full help from the people of the area. This is an indispensable condition. This is clearly seen by considering the case of bandit gangs operating in a region. They have all the characteristics of a guerilla army, homogeneity, respect for the leader, valor, knowledge of the ground, and, often, even good understanding of the tactics to be employed. The only thing missing is support of the people; and inevitably, these gangs are captured and exterminated by the public force” (Guevara 10).

Clearly, Che understood the importance of persuasion. To eliminate the risk of capture and extermination, it is critical to have the people on the side of the rebels. It is ironic that

in his last military expedition, Che would disregard what he had so carefully and meticulously committed to paper.

It seems the monotony of governmental service proved intolerable to Guevara for, although he held the highest position of respect in Castro's government —arguably higher than Fidel's own brother— Che felt that his talents were being wasted and was anxious to apply what he had learned to other revolutions in other countries. With Fidel's blessing, he recruited a group of his finest and most loyal comrades and found his way to Africa, where he fought along side Congolese rebels in an effort to overthrow the current warlord. The Congolese rebel forces were fraught with corruption and incompetence. Monies sent from the Soviet and Cuban government for the purchase of weapons and supplies for the rebel army were diverted to personal accounts. Discipline and leadership were nonexistent. Che's efforts to conduct raids and launch offensives were thwarted by indecisive commanders and uninspired troops. Within nine months, Che and his Cuban comrades left the Congo to its own devices and, after hiding out in the Tanzanian capital of Dar-Es-Salaam, and then in Prague, came ultimately, back to Cuba.

There are many factors that lead to the success of the Cuba Revolution. Those explored in this paper deal mainly with aspects associated with the instigators and focus on their conscious and instinctive exploitation of persuasion and propaganda. It is, of course an incomplete explanation. While I have examined Che and Fidel's skills in the art of influence, and have evaluated the attitudes of those who followed them into battle, I have neglected to mention, in any great detail, the state of pre-revolutionary Cuba. The abuses of the Batista regime, the exploitation of the Cuban proletariat by American

corporations, specifically, United Fruit, and the country's financial disparities, which were not isolated to the lowest economic strata, all played a part in creating an environment ripe for a change in the political landscape. In addition, one cannot underestimate the power of underestimation and over confidence. Crain Brinton, a respected historian, examined four historic revolutions in *The Anatomy of Revolution*: The English of 1640, the American, great French, the Russian Revolutions and observed certain uniformities. Of these, one is especially relevant to my current train of thought:

“...there is a point, or several points, where constituted authority is challenged by the illegal acts of revolutionists. In such instances, the routine response of any authority is to have recourse to force, police or military. Our authorities made such a response but in each case with a striking lack of success” (86).

Brinton goes on to speculate that these “striking” failures were due to over confidence, arrogance, and a failure to accurately assess the threat. The ruling party in pre-revolutionary Cuba was taken completely by surprise by Castro's success and the broad support his movement ultimately received from the Cuban people. Arrogance contributed to the Batista regime's demise. Their inability to imagine the potential of a grass roots movement or the possibility that their own American-backed forces could be challenged by a band of ill-equipped, untrained and disorganized jungle guerillas sealed their fate. It was a factor of which Fidel Castro was well aware and on which, he was more than able to capitalize. For all Che's introspection and psychoanalysis, he failed to take into account the weakness and incompetence of his adversary. In doing so, he ultimately followed the same road to defeat.

Upon his clandestine arrival back in Cuba, Che evaluated potential launch pads for the pan-Latin American revolution he envisioned. Although many countries seemed compatible with his vision, he settled on Bolivia mainly for its central location. With access to five bordering countries, it seemed a convenient place from which to launch offensives, both internally and across borders into Brazil, Peru, Chili, Argentina, and Paraguay.

Bolivia was a country in political turmoil. The former president was overthrown by the military in 1964 and the influential Bolivian worker's union railed against the junta. The local Communist party had split into two factions: the pro-Soviet and the pro-Chinese, the former less willing to take up arms than the latter. Che felt that he could bridge the gap between the two opposing Bolivian sides and, in turn, bring the two Communist superpowers to the table through this common struggle. Such thinking on his part illustrates a level of confidence that certainly borders on arrogance.

It is uncertain how much of a hand Castro played in the Bolivia decision but once made, he gave Guevara his full support. He summoned the leader of the pro-Soviet faction, Mario Monje, to Havana. He inquired about the current Bolivian political landscape. Monje described a situation in which he felt confident that the Communist party could put pressure on the military junta for elections that would ultimately place the Communists in a position of significant influence. Fidel inquired as to the possibility of an armed uprising, to which Monje responded that he thought it unwise. "It was not the answer Castro wanted to hear" (Anderson 685). Fidel suggested Monje take the next few months to reconsider his position. In an effort to assure his safe passage back to his

homeland, the young leader of the Bolivian Communist party quickly “came around” to Fidel’s way of thinking.

In Bolivia, the Cuban advance team had suggested a base of operation that was not to Che’s liking. He wanted to be closer to the Argentine border and, despite their protest, decided on a location relatively dense in population with little sympathy for revolution. Che set about making many decisions that were in direct conflict to what he had documented in *Guerilla Warfare*. He failed to take into account the importance of native support and insisted on being in charge in a social and political environment with which he was less than familiar. He assigned most of the positions of responsibility to Cubans, whom he rationalized, had more combat experience. His Bolivian comrades were insulted. Unlike the situation in Cuba ten years earlier, there was no Fidel behind whom to rally. There was only this “outsider,” this Argentine and his Cuban cohorts. Monje, still livid at having this guerilla campaign thrust upon him, feigned support while advising his Communist party associates to lay low. As Anderson observes, “as of January 1, 1967, Che and his two dozen fighters were, for all intents and purposes, on their own” (705). While Che was out on a reconnaissance and training mission, a series of events back at the base camp lead to the capture of two deserters by the Bolivian army. Their interrogations revealed that Che and his Cuban agitators were in the country. The Bolivian officials alerted the CIA, who had been in search of Guevara ever since he had left Cuba on his African campaign. The local army, with the aid of the CIA pursued Che and his band across the Bolivian landscape through terrain that was not at all what Che had described in his earlier writings as strategically advantageous for guerilla warfare. Within days, most of his comrades were captured or killed and eventually, Guevara was

wounded and captured. After being held for less than 24 hours in a small schoolhouse in a Bolivian mountain town, Che was unceremoniously executed. His body was put on display for journalists and then buried in an unmarked grave with many of his comrades.

In Cuba, Che's success as a leader was contingent upon his skillful use of persuasion. He had an uncanny ability to convince those around him that he was worthy of their loyalty. He was a strong informational social influence by consistently conveying an air of confidence and competence. His assuredness under fire and his undying commitment to his beliefs made him the most likely individual to follow in times of crisis. Was he a master of the four stratagems of influence? In the Cuban campaign, and as a minister in Castro's revolutionary government, he was excellent at setting the stage of *pre-persuasion*, at establishing *source credibility*, at devising a clear and simple *message*, and connecting with his audience on an *emotional* level. But it may be that, without a Bolivian version of Fidel, who lent credibility through faith and trust, and without spending the proper amount of time necessary to win over the people through both deeds and propaganda, Che could not transcend the position of an outsider. As a result of his arrogance and impatience, he failed to employ those stratagems that worked so well ten years earlier. Perhaps, had he chosen his homeland of Argentina as his launch pad, where it would have been easier to establish his own "granfalloon," he may have, one day, marched down the streets of Buenos Aires in victory. As it turned out, the Bolivians saw Che and his Cuban comrades as nothing more than the "bandit gang" he describes in *Guerilla Warfare*.

With the loss of Che Guevara, the proletarian movement lost its most charismatic proponent and a dedicated soldier. But it also gained a martyr. To this day, his face still

appears on posters at demonstrations against the World Trade Organization and other institutions of the *New World Order*. It may be a long time, if ever, before the exploited workers of the Third World will, once again, organize and rise up against their oppressors. But if and when they do, it will be in response to an individual or individuals who have mastered the psychology of persuasion and inspired the masses to follow their lead.



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