

Against Samuel Farber's Biased Approach

February 23, 2024



[This article is part of a debate. For Sam Farber's response, see [here](#).]

Translated from the original review in French by Iain Bruce

[translator's note: *For the quotes taken from Farber's book by the authors, Habel and Löwy, we have gone back to Farber's original text in English. However, in several places the text of the French Syllepse edition differs from the English original in significant ways. For example, while the original English title is neutral, the title in French *Ombres et lumières d'un révolutionnaire* (The light and shade of a revolutionary) suggests a value judgement. Where the differences affect the authors' argument, we have indicated the differences in the lettered footnotes, distinct from the numbered endnotes.*

*In this critical review of a French translation of Samuel Farber's original English-language *The Politics of Che Guevara: Theory and Practice* (Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2016), *Ombres et lumières d'un révolutionnaire* (Paris, Ed. Syllepse, 2017), Janette Habel and Michael Löwy, two well-known scholars of the Cuban Revolution and Ernesto "Che" Guevara's thought, reveal and analyze some of the historical judgements and errors of interpretation that give rise to what they consider Farber's biased approach to Guevara's life, personality, actions, and thought.]*

The demonstrations in Cuba on July 11, 2021, highlighted the seriousness of the crisis facing the island. Never since the victory of the revolution has Cuba experienced such dramatic economic, social, and political difficulties, with the exception of the years following the fall of the USSR, during the so-called "special period," which was marked by shortages of all kinds. The death of Fidel Castro in 2016 and the retirement of Raúl Castro in 2021 have opened the way to a new government. While this generational transition has gone smoothly, its legitimacy is far from consolidated and is even beginning to be questioned. This has been shown in the more local-level protests against shortages of food and medicine and prolonged power cuts that have been taking place across the country since July 11, and which have been reported on the many independent websites, zines and blogs that have

emerged on social media since these events first became known around the country. New generations of Cubans want to re-read the past and review the revolutionary narrative, in order to understand and explain the current impasse, more than 60 years after the overthrow of the Batista dictatorship.

It is in this context that the political and theoretical legacy of Ernesto Che Guevara, murdered in Bolivia at the age of 39, has resurfaced. Many of his abundant writings are still inaccessible. The last letter he wrote to Fidel Castro on the eve of his departure from Cuba on March 25, 1965, was not published until 2019, 54 years later.¹ More than a letter, it is in fact an analytical document of great importance. Although Fidel Castro read a farewell message from Che in October 1965 at the unveiling of the new Central Committee of the Cuban Communist Party (CCP), of which Che was not a part, he made no mention of this much longer letter. The text, described by Guevara as “constructive criticism,” gives an uncompromising analysis of the economic and organizational disorders that affected the country during those early years of the revolution, and sheds light on Che’s political ideas about the economics of the transition to socialism and his differences with the Soviet system.

Six decades later, Cuba has changed, and the country is no longer the same. But Che’s last writings, his criticism of the Soviet regime and his ethical conception of power resonate with those of the new generation who are questioning the past. On the other hand, most opponents of the Cuban system challenge Che and disfigure his legacy. They are not the only ones. Some on the left are lending them a hand.

What follows is a review of *Che Guevara. Ombres et lumières d’un révolutionnaire* [Che Guevara. The light and shade of a revolutionary] (Paris, Ed. Syllepse, 2017)² by Samuel Farber, who presents himself as a “marxist” critic of Guevara. Of course, it is entirely legitimate to examine Guevara’s mistakes or limitations. But Farber’s work, in its overall negative assessment of Guevara, is rife with false, inaccurate, and caricatured accusations. His book, originally published in English in 2016³ and then in French in 2017, focuses mainly on the “shade” and very little on the “light.”

A “Classical Marxist” Tradition?

Farber refers to a supposed “classical Marxist tradition” which he claims to be part of: “My political roots are in the classical Marxist tradition⁴ that preceded Stalinism,” he writes. Conversely, “while Guevara was an honest and dedicated revolutionary, he did not share Lenin’s background in classical Marxism, which assumed the democratic heritage of the radical wing of the Enlightenment.”⁵

The Cuban revolution was born in particular historical and geopolitical circumstances that enabled the victory of an unforeseen revolutionary process in a country—an island—where it was not expected: 165 km from the southern flank of the United States, in the middle of the American Mediterranean, where geographical fatalism seemed to preclude any possibility of emancipation from North American tutelage. Yet it was on this island that the continent’s first socialist revolution—which began as an armed rebellion against the Batista dictatorship—took place, in Latin America’s “far west.”⁶ The specific nature of the Cuban revolutionary process, the organization of a guerrilla war accompanied by civilian uprisings, its radical nature, the scale of the popular support it received and the originality of a leadership that seemed difficult to place ideologically, make it a singular case in the history of revolutions. The Cuban revolution needs to be located in its own historical context, not reduced to the fixed principles of a “classical Marxism” that would remain constant at all times and in all places.

This was “a rebellion against revolutionary dogmas,”⁷ wrote Che. It was a revolution that confirmed

the prediction of the great Latin American Marxist José Carlos Mariátegui: "We certainly don't want socialism in Latin America to be either an imitation or a copy. It must be a heroic creation."⁸ As for Lenin, cited as a reference for "classical Marxism" by Farber, here is what he wrote in *Letters from Afar*: "That the revolution succeeded so quickly and—seemingly, at the first superficial glance—so radically, is only due to the fact that, as a result of an extremely unique historical situation, *absolutely dissimilar currents, absolutely heterogeneous* class interests, *absolutely contrary* political and social strivings have *merged*, and in a strikingly 'harmonious' manner."⁹ An analysis that can be applied a century later, word for word, to the Cuban revolution.

A Generational and Political Break

It was in an exceptional national and international political context that a new revolutionary generation was forged, whose political consciousness was to grow more radical under the pressure of events. In the 1950s, a new, young, and militant generation was born and became politicized in Cuba and in the countries of the Third World. The emergence of national liberation struggles, the Bandung Conference and the Cold War were shaping a new historical order. In Latin America, the revelations of the 20th Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union had weakened the already marginal Communist parties. It was against this backdrop, which had little to do with the so-called "classical Marxism" to which Samuel Farber claims to belong, that the July 26 Movement (M-26-7) was born, its founding act being the deadly attack on the Moncada barracks. Coming from the ranks of the Orthodox Party, a nationalist party, Fidel Castro and the leaders of the M-26-7 embodied the revolt of young people in the face of the passivity of the other political parties, expressing their desire to overthrow the Batista dictatorship but also to free themselves from corruption and the centuries-old domination by the powerful neighbor to the north. It is these young rebels that Farber characterizes as "'declassed', in the sense that they were detached from the organizational life of the Cuban working, middle, and upper classes."¹⁰ It should be noted that to limit Cuban society at the time to the "working, middle and upper classes" is schematic, to say the least. But what is most significant is Farber's analysis of the M-26-7 as a "petty bourgeois movement," as opposed to his later characterization of the Popular Socialist Party (PSP)—as the Cuban Communist Party was then called—as a workers' party. A strange interpretation of Marxism, which turns a petty bourgeois movement into the promoter and actor of a socialist revolution!

As the writer Robert Merle, who spent many months investigating the situation in Havana in the early 1960s, pointed out, "the Movement's recruitment after Moncada was to include a very large number of peasants once it succeeded in establishing itself in the Sierra Maestra. It is therefore all the more striking to note that, before Moncada, the Movement was almost entirely proletarian."¹¹ It should be remembered that in Cuba, the University Student Federation (FEU) had historic links with the workers' movement, dating back to the time of the so-called "treinta" (1930s) revolution, which put an end to the dictatorship of Gerardo Machado and brought Sergeant Fulgencio Batista, then a stenographer, onto the Cuban political scene. In December 1955, the FEU had actively supported the strike by workers in the banking sector as well as the great sugar workers' strike.¹²

Finally, Farber seems unaware of the ideological path travelled by F. Castro. As early as 1953-1954, when he was in prison, he referred to Marx and was already developing a way of thinking and a political strategy that had nothing "petty bourgeois" about it. He quoted *The 18 Brumaire of Napoleon Bonaparte*, "a formidable work," in which "Karl Marx sees the inevitable result of social contradictions and the clash of interests ... Here I have completed my vision of the world," he concluded.¹³ But Farber maintains that the revolution "was carried out by a multiclass movement led by a declassed ... leadership group."¹⁴

The Bohemian Che

From the very introduction to his book, Farber insists that he wants to “dispel many of the common myths about Che,” a laudable concern given the extent to which Guevara’s personality has been misrepresented. But far from doing that, Farber strangely begins by examining “the bohemian origins of Che’s political thought” and “his bohemian career,”¹⁵ which Farber contrasts with his own “political roots.” The adjective “bohemian” appears nine times in the first chapter, an average of once every three pages. To understand the derogatory connotation of this term, we need to set it alongside Farber’s characterization of the July 26 Movement as *petit bourgeois*, made up of “*déclassés*” and “adventurers.”¹⁶ If it was “bohemians” who carried out one of the most important socialist revolutions of the 20th century, that would suggest a need to revise the “classical Marxist tradition” to which Farber lays claim.

As is often the case, at each historical moment, each generation develops a distinct political vehicle. That’s what happened with M-26-7. Farber’s lack of understanding stems from his dogmatic, inadequate vision of the foundations of the July 26 Movement, its origins, its orientation, its leader Fidel Castro, and the political influence exerted by an Argentinian, Ernesto Guevara, whom he met in Mexico. But in addition to these criticisms, Farber goes on to assert something untrue: Che “instead, grew up with the political legacy of a Stalinized Marxism. Thus, his revolutionary perspectives were irremediably (sic) undemocratic.”^{17,A} Yet nothing in Che’s childhood, in his family environment or in his career had anything to do with “Stalinist Marxism.” His motorbike trip at the age of 23 with Alberto Granado is evidence of the evolution of his political thinking and his radicalization, a journey that was rounded off with his experience of the failure of the revolution in Guatemala, the lessons he drew from the behavior of the Guatemalan CP and his exchanges with his Peruvian companion Hilda Gadea, who was close to Trotskyist circles in Peru. As Hilda Gadea remarked, “it was in Guatemala that his real transformation began,” even though at the time of President Arbenz’s overthrow, “he already had a good theoretical training in Marxism.”¹⁸ The former Cuban diplomat Raúl Roa Kouri confirms this: “At that time [in Guatemala] Che already had an advanced political education: above all, clear convictions about the roots of our ills in imperialist exploitation and the domination of a dependent, foreign-oriented bourgeoisie.... You could say that his thinking basically tended towards marxism from that time onwards. He admired the October Revolution and he knew about Leninism.”¹⁹ After his meeting with F. Castro and the M-26-7, Che for the first time made a commitment to a political movement. Before that he had never been a member of any communist party.

He trained with M-26-7 members in Mexico. Fidel Castro was preparing to land on the Cuban coast in November 1956 to organize the overthrow of the dictatorship. The landing was a failure, with many casualties. Guevara was one of the survivors, 28 years old when the armed struggle began in the Sierra Maestra. He would later write: “I began the struggle honestly, without any hope of going beyond the liberation of the country, prepared to leave when the conditions of the struggle turned to the right later on.”²⁰ When he first arrived in Havana in December 1958, now as commander of the Rebel Army and buoyed by his impressive military victories, Ernesto Guevara was 30 years old. He had spent two years fighting with Fidel Castro in the Sierra Maestra, two years of reflection and discussion. His thinking was evolving. He regarded himself as a Marxist and, for a brief period, believed he could find in the countries of Eastern Europe, “on the other side of the Iron Curtain,”²¹ useful points of reference for building a different society. Disillusionment soon followed, as did criticism.

In 1960, he explained: “We were following him”—in other words Fidel Castro—“we were a group of men with little political training, only a lot of goodwill and a naive sense of honor.”²² He soon returned to his reference to the countries behind the “Iron Curtain.” He also spoke of his mistake regarding F. Castro, described at the time as an “authentic left-wing bourgeois,” whose convictions and anti-imperialist strategic vision he underestimated, a process that would give birth to “a

heretical revolution.”²³

The Old Stalinist Party (PSP) Elevated

At the same time as he attributes a “Stalinized Marxism” to Che, the bohemian petit bourgeois, Farber praises the old Cuban Communist Party, the PSP, as a “workers” party whose Stalinist character and serious political errors he underestimates. In 1959, for Moscow and the international communist movement, the Cuban revolution, the first victorious socialist revolution in Latin America not led by a communist party, was a heresy. The growth of Latin American communist parties had always been hampered by their dogmatic alignment and subordination to Moscow, that “classical Marxist tradition,” far removed from the heterodox Marxism of the Peruvian Mariátegui. In fact, it was Farber (and not Guevara) who rehabilitated the role of the PSP in the Cuban revolution. According to Farber, the PSP “did play an integral part of the Cuban revolutionary process, particularly after the triumph of the revolution.”^{24,B} He even went so far as to defend the PSP against the accusation of reformism, stating that, “during the course of the Cuban Revolution, no important PSP figure showed any inclination or commitment to the preservation of the capitalist status quo.”^{25,C}

We do not share this positive assessment of the old Stalinist Communist Party in Cuba. After the revolutionary victory of 1959, the PSP firmly opposed, in the name of the Stalinist doctrine of revolution by stages, the socialist turn of the Cuban revolution. One example will suffice to illustrate this attitude: in August 1960, when the Cuban revolutionary government began to intervene in companies and expropriate large Cuban owners, in the start of an anti-capitalist turn, here is what Blas Roca—not an “important figure” but the General Secretary of the PSP—said at the VIII National Assembly of the Party:

In the present democratic and anti-imperialist stage, it is necessary, within certain limits to be established, to guarantee the profits of private companies, their operation and their development.... There have been excesses, there have been unwarranted interventions which could have been avoided Intervening, without sufficient reason in a company or a factory, does not help us, because it irritates and turns against the revolution ... elements of the national bourgeoisie who must and can remain on the side of the revolution in this stage....²⁶

Worse still: at the same time, the PSP published a pamphlet entitled Trotskyism: Agents of Imperialism, which proclaimed:

Trotskyist provocateurs are lying when they say that the Cuban people are expropriating the property of the imperialists and their national allies. This is what AP, UPI and other imperialist mouthpieces say every day. But it is not true....²⁷

These quotes illustrate how far apart the PSP—like other Latin American communist parties—stands from the great Latin American Marxists like Mariátegui.

These judgements are part of a political continuum. Already in an article in the PSP magazine Carta Semanal, published on September 3, 1953, 5 weeks after the attack on the Moncada barracks, when dozens of young people had been murdered by the dictatorship’s police, the PSP publicly condemned their action in these terms:

Everyone knows that the PSP has been the most resolute opponent of these adventures, the most consistent in showing the people that this is the wrong path to take. Everyone knows that the PSP is the only party that has shown the right way to resolve the Cuban crisis: the resolute rejection of adventures, terrorism, and expeditions, of schemes and isolationism.²⁸

The Sixties and the Building of a New Party — the Growing Influence of the PSP

From the very first years of the revolution, the question of organizing a new party was on the agenda. For F. Castro it was necessary to bring together and unify the three political currents which had contributed, to varying degrees, to the victory—the M-26-7, the Revolutionary Directory, and the PSP—while ensuring the hegemony of the M-26-7. However, Moscow and the international communist movement distrusted the Cuban leaders, while placing their trust in the PSP. The construction of the new party would be long and difficult and would go through several stages. The successive projects of the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (ORI) and then of the United Party of the Socialist Revolution of Cuba (PURSC) came to nothing. It was not until 1965, 6 years after the seizure of power and after lengthy negotiations, that the organization of the new party, the Cuban Communist Party (PCC), began. But its General Secretary was no longer Blas Roca, but Fidel Castro.²⁹

The conception of this new party was illustrated at the time by the words of a PSP political instructor, Gaspar Jorge García Galló, who established the supremacy of the PSP and its cadres in relation to the July 26 Movement, a lasting supremacy that was to provoke a great deal of tension. In a speech to militants at the Leoncio Guerra Basic School of Revolutionary Instruction (Escuelas de Instrucción Revolucionaria - EIR) entitled *The Party of the Proletariat and the People*, García Galló reminded them: "Of course comrades, we know that July 26 was not a Marxist-Leninist party. It lacked Leninist organizational norms. Several currents existed within it, different fractions from the right, the center and the left, even if everyone accepted Fidel's leadership without question."³⁰ Referring to the rapprochement then underway between the three political currents—the M-26-7, the PSP and the Revolutionary Directorate—within the framework of the Integrated Revolutionary Organizations (Organizaciones Revolucionarias Integradas - ORI) intended to found the future single party, García Galló anticipated its operating norms: "The members of the party must be disciplined. They must apply the policies decided upon in the same way as a soldier applies the orders of the General Staff." "The all-out struggle against factions is one of the characteristics of the party of the proletariat. No factional activity can be tolerated."³¹ It was this conception, inherited from Stalinism, that was to prevail when the future CCP was formed, contrary to the initial political pluralism. The links with the USSR facilitated the bureaucratic grip of the PSP. This explains the many crises that arose and which marked the first revolutionary decade. The CCP's organizational norms would never change. Fidel Castro lived with them. He increasingly distanced himself from the stranglehold of the PSP and the growing influence of Soviet economic, political, and cultural concepts.

Unfounded Assertions

Contrary to Farber's unfounded assertions that "Guevara's politics were closer to the ultraleftist militancy of the Communist International's so-called Third Period of the late 20s and early 30s [than to the political maneuvering of Popular Front politics],"^{32, D} a brief comparison of Guevara's ideas with those of the Stalinism of the so-called "Third Period" reveals the absurdity of this argument. One of the main aspects of Stalinism in the years 1929-33 was the refusal to see fascism (Hitler in Germany) as the main enemy. In fact, Stalinists in Germany and elsewhere saw social democracy—defined as "social fascism"—as the greatest enemy of the communist movement, with catastrophic consequences for workers, and for humanity. This was the most important and decisive feature of the Third Period of the Comintern, and the reason why Trotsky had come to the conclusion, as early as 1933, that a new international was necessary.

In the 1930s, the Cuban Communist Party, forerunner of the PSP and faithful follower of Moscow, had accepted without qualification the Third International's slogans on "social fascism" and the "class against class" struggle, which led it, like the other Communist Parties on the sub-continent, to adopt a sectarian and sterile policy and to refuse any collaboration with other left-wing political

forces. The Communists did not take part in the struggle to overthrow Machado's dictatorship.

Can we find anything similar in Guevara? Did he consider that the military dictatorships in Latin America, supported by imperialism, were not the main adversary to be fought? Did he define the socialist parties, in Chile and Argentina for example, as the main enemy? Did he ever use the term "social fascism" to designate social democrats or reformists?

The "Third Period" of Stalinism was not a "left turn" in foreign policy, but a period of brutal repression of dissent, when thousands of communist opponents, supporters of Trotsky and his companions, were sent to concentration camps in Siberia, and sometimes murdered. It was also the period when millions of peasants, accused of being "kulaks," were exterminated. Any similarities with Guevara?

Are Che Guevara's views on the economy and politics equivalent to those of Soviet forced industrialization in 1929-33? It should be remembered that Ernest Mandel, a Marxist economist, went to Cuba in 1964³³ at Guevara's invitation, and that Mandel had written an article supporting his positions in the economic debate then taking place in Cuba. Apparently, he was unaware that these were Stalinist views from the Third Period.... Moreover, another Marxist economist, Charles Bettelheim, had strongly criticized Guevara's thesis, describing it as heretical and "non-Marxist" because it contradicted ... Stalin's economic theories.³⁴

According to Farber, "Third Period Stalinism, Maoism, and Guevarism had a more aggressive and revolutionary attitude toward capitalism as they tried to spread their form of class rule to countries beyond their own."³⁵ To be sure, the "internationalism" of Stalinist discourse during the Third Period, or of Maoism in the 60s and 70s, was nothing more than an instrument serving the interests of the Soviet and Chinese bureaucracies. Does this apply to Guevara's internationalism? Was it true of his failed internationalist revolutionary attempts in the Congo and Bolivia? What bureaucratic interests did he serve when, as an Argentinian, he joined the Cuban revolutionaries in 1956?

To conclude on this question, there is nothing wrong with a critical examination of Guevara's positions, which he himself encouraged in his debates with his collaborators at the Ministry of Industry.³⁶ But the artificial, not to say slanderous, analogy with Stalinism of the Third Period is a sure way of missing the point. Not only can Che Guevara not be identified with the failures of the Soviet Union, but a quarter of a century before the disappearance of the USSR and the fall of the Berlin Wall, he had foreseen the crisis and the collapse of the Soviet regime and predicted the restoration of capitalism.

Che and the Great Economic Debate — the Transition to Socialism and Underdevelopment

It is in the light of his experience in power that Che analyses the problems and difficulties of the transition to socialism in Cuba. A re-reading of his last texts in the great public debate on economics, which pitted him against the supporters of Soviet liberal reforms in the 1960s, his essay on *Socialism and Man in Cuba*,³⁷ his last speeches, in particular the one he gave in Algiers in 1965, and his *Critical Notes on the Manual of Political Economy* of the Soviet Academy of Sciences³⁸ all illustrate his prescient vision of the serious problems facing the USSR and the difficulties that were likely to ensue for Cuba, given its economic and financial dependence on Moscow.

The great debate that took place between 1963 and 1964 within the Ministry of Industry, which he headed, was first and foremost a debate on the building of socialism, on planning and the organization of the economy during the transition to socialism in a small and dependent island, subject to the pressures of the international market, whose development was hampered by a drastic economic and trade blockade imposed by the world's leading economic power.

Beyond the theoretical debate on the existence of market categories and the persistence of the law of value during the transition period, distinct political approaches were to emerge within the Cuban government, even as proposals for market-based economic reforms were put forward during the 1960s by the Soviet economists Evsei Liberman and Vadim Trapeznikov. Noting the inefficiency of the management methods used in the USSR, Liberman and Trapeznikov criticized a planning system based on mandatory targets which they considered too restrictive. To remedy this, they proposed the introduction of profit as one of the criteria for the sound management of enterprises.

The debate took place in Havana at the same time as these reforms were being introduced. The island was facing the need to redefine a strategy for economic and social development in the face of the challenge posed by its integration into a globalized capitalist economy. An added difficulty was that, as Ernesto Che Guevara wrote, "We were just beginning to learn about this march towards communism,"³⁹ at the same time as "the political economy of the transition period is completely missing."⁴⁰

Farber devotes more than 20 pages of his book to these economic debates. From the outset he states that Che "came to see socialism itself as centralized economic planning and the rejection of competition and the law of value."⁴¹ But Samuel Farber has misread these texts by Che. In fact, in relation to the application of the law of value under socialism, and in response to an article by Alberto Mora entitled, "On the question of the operation of the law of value in the Cuban economy at the present time," Guevara wrote:

How to manage consciously our knowledge of the law of value ... is one of the most serious problems posed by the socialist economy ... We are not denying the existence of the law of value, we simply consider that this law derives its most developed form of action from the capitalist market and that the changes introduced into the market by the socialization of the means of production and distribution lead to transformations which make it impossible to clarify its action immediately⁴² ... while we accept the existence of the commodity, we do not accept the primary role of the market ... as the organizer of the national economy.⁴³

In contrast to Farber's assertions, here are the nuanced comments of one of Che's opponents, the former minister Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, who underlined the complexity of the controversy:

The theory of eliminating the law of value was not put forward by Che as absolute, and it is interesting to remember this, since we accept the validity of the law of value for certain purposes. He said that the law of value should not govern economic activity, that we had the possibility created by socialism to manipulate the law of value, to use it for the benefit of socialism. I think this is important Because, in fact, it is not a question, as some of the defenders of economic calculation at the time tried to establish, of the absolute defense of the validity of the law of value and the inevitability of the market, but of the use of the law of value in a controlled way, fundamentally taking into account the elements imposed by our responsibility for the economy in our times, in our country.⁴⁴

Farber makes accusations against ideas attributed to Che without substantiating them. We shall highlight three of them.

His "opposition to the capitalist market and competitive system that tends to commodify everything, including human relations, and ... [his] praise for the individual's selfless dedication to the collectivity,... can in fact be the basis for a reactionary utopianism attempting to emulate pre-capitalist social formations."^{45, E} Where does Guevara refer to "pre-capitalist formations"? How is his

argument against the capitalist market and in favor of altruistic commitment “a reactionary utopia”? Farber gives no explanation and cites no text by Che to back up this strange accusation. José Carlos Mariátegui, in the 1920s, referred to the collectivism of pre-capitalist formations, considering that the tradition of the *ayllu*, the pre-Columbian rural community, could be a starting point for mobilizing peasants in a modern socialist movement. He was not, however, a “reactionary,” even if his point of view was rejected as “populist” (*narodnik*) by the Stalinists. We do not know whether Guevara shared Mariátegui’s ideas, but they were considered a “reactionary utopia” only by the Stalinists.

In his “Critical Notes” on the Soviet manual of political economy, Guevara, according to Farber, implies that a decision on economic priorities “would be decided solely by the ruling Communist Party.”⁴⁶ Yet Che wrote exactly the opposite in his “Critical Notes,” kept under wraps by the authorities in Cuba until the early 2000s, when he asserted that the plan should be conceived as “an economic decision by the masses, conscious of their role.... We have seen something fundamental, something elementary, the importance, the enthusiasm of the people when they know they are going to elect their representatives.”⁴⁷ In the same vein, Farber accuses Guevara of showing “his disregard for the principle of the popular election of representatives in every facet of socialist society.”⁴⁸ This inaccurate reading is belied by Che’s criticism of the unions and the role of the party:

Here, union democracy is a myth, whether we like it or not, but it’s a perfect myth. The party meets and proposes to those present so-and-so, X or Y, a single candidate, and from that moment on, someone is elected, with a more or less large turnout, but in reality, there was no process of selection by the participants.⁴⁹

He stresses:

From an institutional point of view, we need to be attentive to the fact that people need to express themselves, we need a framework so that they can express themselves, we need to think about this ... the need to create the necessary democratic basis for the construction of new institutions.⁵⁰

He also criticized the union bureaucracy that had developed, and which did not want to return to manual labor.⁵¹ He pointed out that “the work of the CTC has left a lot to be desired recently.”⁵² The relationship between socialism and man was at the heart of his concerns. To claim that for Guevara the major economic decisions “would be decided solely by the ruling Communist Party” is simply untrue.

According to Farber, “there was a deafening silence in *Socialism and Man in Cuba* about substantially increasing consumer goods and, more generally, about raising the standard of living of the Cuban population.”⁵³ Yet Farber himself contradicts this statement. A few dozen pages earlier, he observes that Guevara, as Minister of Industry, wanted “the doubling of living standards in just four years.”⁵⁴ Admittedly, as he himself later admitted, this plan was not realistic. But it shows that the “significant increase in consumer goods” was not at all outside his conception of socialism. “The peasant (*guajiro*) also aspires to have a television,” he wrote.⁵⁵ As usual, he also acknowledged the mistakes that had been made, pointing out the need for housing for Cubans and regretting that house building was steadily on the decline. “We mustn’t forget that people need to live in a house, yet we are building fewer and fewer of them, investing less and less in their construction.”⁵⁶ This was an implicit criticism of the planning mistakes and decisions made by other ministries. It’s worth noting in passing how decisive planning was for Che, a strange preoccupation for a “bohemian” mind.

“In mid-1961, he announced, on behalf of the revolutionary government, a highly unrealistic four-

year economic plan,"⁵⁷ wrote Farber, in what he saw as an illustration of Che's "voluntarism." Let's overlook the fact that this was a decision made "in the name of the government," a government whose president Fidel Castro was not one to allow choices he did not share to be imposed on him. This was all the more true given that the drive towards rapid industrialization attempted at the start of the revolution was in line with the commitment made by Fidel Castro in 1953 in his speech *History Will Absolve Me*, and later by the M-26-7 leadership in the Sierra Maestra, to break with Cuba's historical dependence on the monoculture of sugar cane. However, the revolutionary leadership had underestimated the obstacles it would face in severing the ties of economic subordination that had developed over decades, ties documented by numerous authors including the Cuban historians Ramiro Guerra and Manuel Moreno Friginals.⁵⁸

Carried away by his own enthusiasm, Farber compares the plan attributed to Guevara, "to Mao Tse Tung's great leap forward," an economic policy that caused "a famine that killed millions of people."⁵⁹ Once again Farber targets Guevara and blames him for the agricultural disaster of the early 1960s, while overlooking Fidel Castro's own responsibilities, as highlighted by R. Dumont. The real agricultural disaster was caused by the failure to harvest 10 million tons of sugar in 1970, an objective linked to agreements signed with Moscow, which Che Guevara had nothing to do with.

Against Dogmatism

Farber's accusation that Che had a "monolithic conception of socialism that ignored the hierarchical division of labor and ruled out any conflict of interests other than the class interests that were being eliminated"⁶⁰ is perhaps the most outlandish, given the abundance of evidence to the contrary. He was considered a heretic and wrongly labelled a Trotskyist by the Soviets. Farber does not mention Che's stance in favor of freedom of expression. He acknowledges that he protected the Trotskyists, but plays this down: it was because the Cuban Trotskyists "were supporters, even if critical ones, of the one-party state that had just been established in Cuba!"^{61,F} A curious thing to say about the members of a Cuban Trotskyist party that was independent of the Cuban Communist Party, semi-clandestine, repressed and eventually banned.

In 1964, during a discussion with his comrades at the Ministry of Industry, when Trotsky's books (including *The Permanent Revolution*) were about to be destroyed, Guevara reaffirmed: "We must be capable of fighting opposing opinions with arguments, and if not, we should let them express themselves. It is not possible to fight opinions by force because that kills the free development of the intellect."⁶² These statements are all the more significant in that they confirm his disagreements with the Trotskyists. In 1965, on the eve of his departure from Cuba, he had the Cuban Trotskyist Roberto Acosta Echevarría released from prison, embracing him and declaring: "Acosta, ideas cannot be killed with batons."⁶³ At the Ministry of Industry, meetings to take stock and discuss issues gave rise to disagreements and polemics, reproduced in the book by his deputy minister Orlando Borrego.⁶⁴ He had opened his doors to Alberto Mora, the former Minister for Foreign Trade and his opponent in the economic debate.

In his closing speech to an international meeting of teachers and students of architecture in 1963, Che further clarified his views:

We have never refused confrontation or discussion. We have always agreed to discuss all ideas and the only thing we have not allowed is the abuse of ideas to blackmail or sabotage the revolution. On that, we have indeed been inflexible ... There were some professionals who were jailed for counter-revolutionary acts, for sabotage. In prison, these professionals began working, then they returned to work in our industries. We trust them, as we do our other technicians, and they got back to work even though they've experienced repression, which is the hardest and darkest part of the revolution, the repression that is inevitable in a victorious

revolution ... Because when it comes to those who take up arms against us, be they weapons of direct destruction, or ideological weapons to destroy society, we are implacable. To the others, to those who are just discontented or disagree, who are not and never will be socialists, we say: nobody ever asked you before if you were in favor of capitalism, you had a contract to fulfil and you did it. Now do the same, work, hold on to whatever ideas you like, we won't meddle with your ideas.⁶⁵

The testimony of the poet Heberto Padilla is revealing. Returning from a trip to the USSR, he gave free rein to his criticism and disillusionment during a meeting with Che. Guevara agreed: "All of that is crap, I've seen it with my own eyes."⁶⁶ Guevara was clear about his concerns, telling the poet, who was looking for a job in journalism: "These are bad times to be a journalist,"⁶⁷ and advising him to abandon the project and get a job in the Ministry of Foreign Trade headed by Alberto Mora. H. Padilla would later, in 1971, be subjected to a Stalinist trial and forced to make a public self-criticism.

Farber tries in every way possible to reduce Che's thinking to the Stalinist mold. Using quotes from a declared opponent of the revolution and detractor of Guevara, he cites Jorge Castañeda⁶⁸ to claim that "Guevara had closely identified with Joseph Stalin" and says that this "identification with Stalin continued."⁶⁹ It is true that in a letter to his aunt in 1953, during his first trip through Latin America, Guevara praised "comrade Stalin." But the fact that he did not join any communist party shows how unimportant this youthful episode was, at the age of 25. From there to making Che out to be a Stalinist is a step that Farber, the "orthodox Marxist," takes without hesitation.

In fact, as Luis Simón, an M-26-7 intellectual, recalls, when he met Guevara in September 1958 "in the middle of the rain and the mosquitoes," Guevara borrowed Merleau-Ponty's Existentialism and Marxism from him and, when discussing international politics, "he bitterly criticized Stalinism and the Budapest massacre."⁷⁰ In his "Critical Notes," he pointed out "the terrible historical crime of Stalin: to have scorned communist education and introduced an unlimited cult of authority."⁷¹

Farber also accuses Guevara of being a repressive — albeit "honest" — communist, comparable to the Russian Felix Dzerzhinsky. He writes: "A parallel can perhaps be drawn between Ernesto Che Guevara and Felix Dzerzhinsky.... Although known for his often arbitrary repressive activities as head of the Cheka, the Soviet secret police, Dzerzhinsky was also thought to be an honest and principled communist."⁷² But did Guevara lead a political police force comparable to the Soviet Cheka under Dzerzhinsky, responsible for the execution of thousands of opponents, including left-wing opponents (anarchists, left-wing agrarian socialists, etc.)?

Similarly, for Farber, Che's views "were far from the 'humanist' philosophy that some sympathizers have attributed to him. During his days in the Sierra, Guevara opposed Fidel Castro's very effective tactic of returning prisoners."⁷³ Farber obtained this "information" from Castañeda's hostile and scathing biography of Che. In his bibliography, Farber often favors the writings of opponents of the revolution⁷⁴ over the many testimonies of the fighters in the Sierra⁷⁵ and all those who accompanied Che at the Ministry of Industry until his departure in 1965. But the reality is exactly the opposite of Farber's assertions! "So long as there are no large operational bases or secure locations, don't take prisoners. Survivors should be released and the wounded treated by all possible means," proclaimed Guevara in his manual, *Guerrilla Warfare*. This was also his practice as a guerrilla commander in Bolivia. In his *Bolivian Diary*, he wrote: "Two new spies were taken prisoner: a police lieutenant and a policeman. They were taken to task and set free."⁷⁶ Farber himself had to admit that Che had opposed the execution of Huber Matos, an anti-communist opposition figure, and even his imprisonment (he was sentenced to 20 years in prison). He had contacted his family and suggested that they appeal against the trial (according to testimony given by Huber Matos after his release).⁷⁷

Another testimony, published in France by Luis Alberto Lavandeyra, a former member of Che's guerrilla column in the Sierra Maestra, illustrates Che's ethics and respect for life during the battle of Santa Clara:

He had meticulously prepared an ambush at the top of a valley where a battalion of soldiers was due to pass. Batista's whole army was black. He told us: I'll shoot first and that'll be the signal. So the company marched through, but Che didn't fire. Once the company had gone, the whole troop hurried over to him in surprise: "We were waiting for your signal. Why didn't you fire, Commander?" I was thinking. We've won the war. What's the point of a massacre? These are soldiers recruited from the poorest backgrounds and they have wives and children.⁷⁸

It was a case of ethical thought in the midst of combat. Che asked himself ethical questions on a daily basis. And he would do the same in Bolivia, freeing soldiers who had been taken prisoner.

Leaving Cuba. Bolivia

"Although he had failed in the Congo," writes Farber, "he (Guevara) saw no reason to change the decision he had made in 1965 to resign his Cuban citizenship and government responsibilities."⁷⁹ Farber echoes the official version, presenting this decision as a personal choice independent of the political situation characterized by tensions with Moscow after his speech in Algiers. Farber cannot be unaware that the reality was quite different. After his return to Havana, Guevara made no further public appearances. By the end of 1964, the Minister for Industry had already made clear his many differences with Soviet foreign policy and economic reforms. He was the target of vilification by certain PSP apparatchiks. He knew this. "In some respects, I have expressed views close to those of the Chinese on the People's War and guerrilla warfare. And since I am also identified with the Budget Financing System, I am also accused of being a Trotskyist. They say that the Chinese also are factional and Trotskyist, and they hang the San Benito on me too," he writes. (The San Benito is the garment of infamy which the Inquisition placed on those it condemned to be burnt at the stake).⁸⁰

On his return to Havana on March 14, 1965, he wrote to his mother that he was "leaving for the provinces for a month to cut sugar cane,"⁸¹ to the disbelief of his close colleagues. As René Dumont notes, in reality, disavowed, he had already discreetly resigned from his post as minister.⁸²

This decision was the culmination of growing tensions between Havana and Moscow, in which he was one of the protagonists. During his last trip to the USSR, he had had, in his own words, "several scientific arguments" with Soviet students and economists invited to the Cuban Embassy.⁸³ The Algiers speech was the culmination of the public expression of his disagreements, which he would comment on in his analysis addressed to F. Castro, published only in 2019 after the latter's death.

After the failure in the Congo, he wrote to Fidel to dissuade him from sending reinforcements, returned to Cuba clandestinely and then left the island in 1966 for Bolivia. The choice of location and the organizational and political preparations were made at the highest level of the Cuban leadership.⁸⁴

Farber asserts that "Che's expeditionary force was unable to forge an effective supportive relationship with the Bolivian left."^{85,G} However, statements by the miners' unions and left-wing political organizations—with the exception of the Bolivian Communist Party (Partido Comunista de Bolivia, PCB) but not including its youth organization—categorically refute these assertions. According to Guillermo Lora, secretary general of the Partido Obrero Revolucionario (POR),⁸⁶ in an interview with the Mexican journalist, Rubén Vázquez Díaz: "The only road to power for the working class, the Bolivian proletariat, starts from the mines...."⁸⁷ Without the working class, the guerrillas

are nothing. The POR supports the guerrilla movement unconditionally because it is the logical outcome of the current situation in Bolivia.... Our help and support is unlimited.”⁸⁸ When asked by Vásquez Díaz if the POR was prepared to send men to join the guerrillas, Lora replied without hesitation “Yes, men too.”⁸⁹ The other Trotskyist organization, affiliated to the 4th International (González Moscoso’s POR), had sent members to train in Cuba to join the Bolivian guerrillas. They remained stranded on the island, unable to leave the country to join the guerrillas.

The Bolivians Carlos Soria Galvarro, José Pimentel Castillo, and Eduardo García Cárdenas⁹⁰ recount this key conflict in the history of the Andean-Amazonian country. Soria Galvarro tells the story in the book’s first chapter, “Mineros y guerrilleros,” of the days in May 1965 when the pact between miners, academics and students was ratified. It was a period in which the courts came down hard on the miners and union leaders who organized assemblies and strikes to defend their demands were attacked and sentenced, in which the death penalty was reinstated by the dictator Barrientos, left-wing parties were outlawed for having publicly expressed their solidarity with the guerrillas and all public meetings and demonstrations were strictly forbidden; after the confrontations between the guerrillas and the army began in March 1967 in the south-east of the country, the presence of the guerrillas made the front page of the newspapers.

Another testimony that contradicts Farber’s claim is that of Domitila Barrios de Chungara, a Bolivian miners’ leader, who recalls that in Che’s guerrilla movement there were several fighters who came from the mines and that workers organized activities in favor of the guerrilla movement, because this was the army of the people, of the workers, of the exploited, and that they decided to support it by sending the money earned from a day’s work, food and medicine. According to Barrios de Chungara, many miners believed that she was in charge of coordinating support for the guerrillas and even went to sign up with her to join the guerrilla movement.⁹¹

On May 25, 1967, in its issue 17, the magazine *Fedmineros*, put out by the powerful Mine Workers Trade Union Federation of Bolivia (FSTMB), published an article entitled, “Frente Guerrillero,” in which it said:

Hunger, misery, exploitation, violence, gangsterism and the persecution imposed by the Barrientos government are all the result of the appearance of the guerrillas. The generals say they are bandoleros (bandits), enemies of the poor, but nobody believes them. We can safely say that the majority of workers view the action of the guerrillas with sympathy. This is the truth. And it couldn’t be otherwise when you live with injustice, when you’re unemployed and underfed. We know that the yanquis are fighting against the guerrillas, and that outrages the workers.⁹²

On June 6, a general assembly of mineworkers and union leaders from the Siglo XX and Catavi mines passed a resolution with 13 points. In one of these, they called for “Moral and material support for the patriotic guerrillas operating in the south-east of the country,” and for “the sending of medicine and food.”⁹³

The next day, the military junta declared a state of siege. “According to the [Bolivian] government spokesman, the measure was taken mainly because of the Huanuni miners’ threat to march in protest to the city of Oruro and because several miners’ leaders had made speeches that were ‘frankly subversive and in support of the guerrillas operating in the southeast of the country.’”⁹⁴

In an interview given in 1967, the sociologist René Zavaleta Mercado, former Minister of Mines in the Movimiento Nacionalista Revolucionario (MNR) government, stated: “in three months’ time we will be able to send our first contingents to the guerrillas and, if we get help, we think we will be able to set up a propaganda network. ... The great merit of the guerrillas is that they have broken

with all traditional political conceptions and have been able move beyond partisan politics.”⁹⁵

The miners were to suffer a massacre on the night of San Juan. It was after this butchery that Guevara published his Communiqué No. 5 to the Bolivian miners, which Farber misinterprets. Farber claims that Guevara warned “the miners to refrain from following the ‘false apostles of mass struggle’ ... and instead made the highly unrealistic proposal of asking the miners to abandon their jobs, families, and communities to move elsewhere to join his guerrilla group ... led mostly by people foreign to their class and country.”^{96,H} But what does the communiqué in question⁹⁷ actually say?

We must not persist with false tactics, which are heroic but sterile, which plunge the proletariat into a bloodbath and decimate its ranks, depriving us of its most combative elements.... Against machine guns, heroic breasts can achieve nothing.

The communiqué recommended “not committing forces to actions whose success is uncertain, even though the pressure of the masses against the government must be exerted continuously, because this is a class struggle with unlimited fronts. The text concluded, “Comrade miner, the ELN guerrillas are waiting for you with open arms.”⁹⁸ It was a conclusion in keeping with the debates of the 1960s on the relationship between armed struggle and mass struggles in Latin America, seven years after the Cuban victory.

An Act of Indictment

Farber’s book reads like an act of indictment. He goes on and on about Che’s shortcomings and defects. A whole section of Chapter 2 is titled “Guevara’s Political Schematism and Indifference to Specific Contexts” (pp.23-25). There are many variations on this theme: his “frequent inability to understand specific political situations” (p.4), his “ignorance of, and indifference to specific political contexts” (p.23), “his inability to recognize specific political textures and historical conjunctures in Cuba during the period of armed struggle” (p.23), the “political deafness” (p.23), “Guevara lacked that hard-to-define but real trait called political instinct” (p.23 and 46), “tactical blindness” (p.24), and indifference “to the concrete historical record and political meaning” of the period marked by the 1940 Constitution (p.25), and so on. All of this is always in contrast to the “genius” of F. Castro.

Even Che’s internationalism is called into question because, according to Farber, it was based on a project that he shared with the Castro brothers and the pro-Soviet communists right up to the end, “a project based on the creation of a new class system.”⁹⁹ For Farber, the bureaucracy is a new social class that the non-proletarian, “bohemian petit bourgeois,” Che, would have embraced very naturally. QED.

Farber maintains that “most Cubans also think of Che as a failed quixotic figure.”¹⁰⁰ According to him, today “Che is not at all influential among the various wings of the Cuban opposition.”¹⁰¹ But the Cuban opposition is not homogeneous. The reflections of the new Cuban generations on the record of the country’s leaders are harsh. Their criticisms are diverse and in flux. Guevara’s fight against the privileges of the bureaucracy and growing inequalities, his analyses anticipating the collapse of the USSR, and his ethical conception of power, explain the prestige he enjoys among the critical left, particularly among young people who have broken with orthodoxy. In a text published in March 2023 in *La Joven Cuba*, the young Afro-Cuban Alexander Hall Lujardo (who had been arrested during the demonstrations of July 11, 2021), referring to Che’s last letter to Fidel, reminds us that “for more than 40 years Cuba’s leaders have ignored the criticisms made by the internationalist revolutionary Ernesto Che Guevara, a radical Marxist point of view in favor of the island’s economic autonomy as the only way of guaranteeing its national sovereignty.”

Nothing could be more alien to Ernesto Guevara’s way of thinking than an apologetic approach that

glosses over errors and differences. "If you disagree, then write it down," is what Enrique Oltuski recalls Che saying when he commented on some aspect of the revolutionary war.¹⁰²

Interrupted by his death at the age of 39, Che's project for a socialist transition remained unfinished, as the Cuban historian Fernando Martinez Heredia has pointed out. His thinking was constantly evolving. He lacked a structured, organic conception of the necessarily pluralist, political democracy in the transition to socialism. However, as he himself wrote, in his short life he had known only "an armed democracy."¹⁰³

Nonetheless, we can understand nothing of Che Guevara's theoretical and strategic thinking, his political and ethical influence, if we reduce him to a Stalinist of the Third Period or a Chekist of the 1920s. Nor can we portray him as a pure idealist, whose "personal and political characteristics—his political honesty and his radical egalitarianism—might have made him better suited to being a Communist oppositionist than a long-term Communist ruler...."¹⁰⁴

It is impossible to write about Che Guevara without referring to the context in which he thought and acted, firstly between 1955 and 1959, and then between 1959 and 1965, when he was entrusted with the highest responsibilities in a revolution that was starting a process of socialist transition along unforeseen paths, in a historical context that forced him to "navigate between the imperialist Charybdis and the totalitarian Scylla."¹⁰⁵

Notes

1. Aurelio Alonso, "Discutirla, con veneración e irreverencia. A propósito de la carta de Che Guevara a Fidel, 26/03/1965," *La Tizza*, June 28, 2019.
2. Samuel Farber, *Che Guevara. Ombres et lumières d'un révolutionnaire*, Paris, Ed, Syllepse, 2017.
3. Samuel Farber, *The Politics of Che Guevara. Theory and Practice*, Chicago, Haymarket Books, 2016.
4. Farber, 2016, p. xvii.
5. Farber, 2016, p. xviii.
6. Alain Rouquié, *Amérique Latine. Introduction à l'Extrême-Occident*, Paris, Seuil, 1987.
7. Ernesto Che Guevara, *The Bolivian Diary*, Melbourne-New York, Ocean Press, 2006.
8. José Carlos Mariátegui, "Aniversario y balance," in *Ideología y Política* (Obras completas, Tomo 13), Lima, Amauta, 1971, p. 252.
9. V. I. Lenin, *Collected Works*, Volume 23, Moscow, Progress Publishers, 1964, p. 303.
10. Farber, 2016, p. 10.
11. Robert Merle, *Moncada. Premier combat de Fidel Castro*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1965, p. 84.
12. Julio Garcia Oliveras "El movimiento estudiantil antibatistiano y la ideología de la revolución," in *1959, una rebelión contra las oligarquías y los dogmas revolucionarios*, Havana, Ruth Casa Editorial, 2009, p. 20.
13. Merle, *Moncada*, pp. 341-348.

14. Farber, 2016, p. 116.
15. Farber, 2016, pp. 1-5.
16. Farber, 2016, pp. 8-9.
17. Farber, 2016, p. xviii.
18. Hilda Gadea, *Che Guevara. Años decisivos*, México, Aguilar, 1972, pp. 14-15.
19. Raúl Roa Kouri, *En el torrente*, Havana, Casa Editora Abril, 2018, p. 72.
20. Ernesto Guevara, letter dated 14 December 1957 to René Ramos Latour ("Daniel"), in: Carlos Franqui, *Diario de la revolución cubana*, Barcelona, R. Torres, 1976, p. 362.
21. Ibid.
22. Lettre à Ernesto Sábato, April 12, 1960, in Ernesto Che Guevara, *Lettres 1947- 1967*, Paris, Au Diable Vauvert, 2021, p. 261.
23. René Dumont, *Cuba est-il socialiste?* Paris, Seuil, 1970.
24. Farber, 2016, p. 116.
25. Farber, 2016, p. 20.
26. Blas Roca, *Balance de la labor del Partido desde la última Asamblea Nacional y el desarrollo de la Revolución*, Havana, 1960, pp. 87-88.
27. Quoted by Silvio Frondizi, an Argentinean anti-stalinist revolutionary, in his book *La revolución cubana*, Montevideo, Editorial Ciencia Política, 1960, p. 151.
28. *Carta Semanal*, N° 7, 26.9.1953, quoted by Caridad Massón Sena in *1959, una rebelión contra las oligarquías y los dogmas revolucionarios*, Havana, Ruth Casa Editorial, 2009, p. 229.
29. Che Guevara was not a member of the Political Bureau nor the Central Committee of the new CCP. He left Cuba after a speech given in Algiers that questioned Soviet policies.
30. Gaspar Jorge Garcia Galló, "El partido del proletariado y del pueblo," Havana, Departamento de Extensión Educacional, 1962, p. 23.
31. Garcia Galló, pp. 25-26.
32. Farber, 2016, pp. 17, 113.
33. Published in Havana in the journal *Nuestra Industria* edited by Guevara, and later in *Pensamiento Crítico*.
34. See Ernesto Che Guevara, Charles Bettelheim, Ernest Mandel, *The Great Debate on Political Economy*, Havana, Ocean Press, 2006.
35. Farber, 2016, p. 113-114.
36. Alonso, "Discutirla, con veneración e irreverencia...."

37. Ernesto Guevara, *El socialismo y el hombre en Cuba*, Havana, Ocean Sur, 2005.
38. See Ernesto Guevara, *Apuntes críticos a la economía*, Havana, Ocean Sur, 2006, and Orlando Borrego, *Che: El camino del fuego*, Buenos Aires, Editorial Hombre Nuevo, 2001, pp. 381-422.
39. Alonso, "Discutirla, con veneración e irreverencia...."
40. Guevara, *Apuntes críticos*, p. 342.
41. Farber, 2016, p. 90. Our emphasis.
42. Ernesto Guevara, "Sobre la concepción del valor (Contestando algunas afirmaciones sobre el tema)," *Nuestra Industria. Revista Económica*, La Habana, October 1963. Taken from Ernesto Guevara, *Escritos económicos*, Córdoba (Argentina), Ediciones Pasado y Presente (Cuadernos de Pasado y Presente/5), pp. 69-77.
43. Ernesto Che Guevara, *Ecrits d'un révolutionnaire*, Paris, La Brèche, 1987, p. 31. Cf. also *Apuntes críticos*, p. 369. Also quoted by Aurelio Alonso in "Del debate de ayer al debate de mañana," Prologue to the 29th edición of Carlos Tablada *El pensamiento económico del Che*, Havana, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 2017, p. 13.
44. Carlos Rafael Rodríguez, "Sobre la contribución del Che al desarrollo de la economía cubana," *Cuba Socialista*, N° 33, 1988.
45. Farber, 2016, p. 81.
46. Farber, 2016, p. 93.
47. Guevara, *Apuntes críticos*, p. 413.
48. Farber, 2016, p. 93.
49. Orlando Borrego (comp.), *Che en la Revolución Cubana*, Havana, Editorial José Martí, 2013, vol. VI, p. 438.
50. Borrego, *Che en la Revolución Cubana*, vol. VI, p. 438.
51. Borrego, *Che en la Revolución Cubana*, vol. VI, p. 439.
52. Borrego, *Che en la Revolución Cubana*, vol. VI, p. 529.
53. Farber, 2016, p. 78.
54. Farber, 2016, p. 21.
55. Guevara, *Apuntes críticos a la economía*, p. 304.
56. "Opiniones del Ministerio sobre el Plan perspectivo de 1964," in Borrego, *Che en la Revolución Cubana*, vol. VI, p. 732.
57. Borrego, *Che en la Revolución Cubana*, vol. VI, p. 21.
58. Manuel Moreno Fraginals, *El ingenio. Complejo económico social cubano del azúcar*, Havana, Editorial de Ciencias Sociales, 1978.

59. Farber, 2016, pp. 113.
60. Farber, 2016, pp. 67-68.
61. Farber, 2016, p. 17.
62. Borrego, *Che en la Revolución Cubana*, Vol. VI, p. 566.
63. Rafael Acosta de Arriba, "El fin del Trotskismo organizado en Cuba," in Caridad Massón (ed.), *Las Izquierdas Latinoamericanas. Multiplicidad y Experiencias durante el Siglo XX*, Santiago de Chile, 2017, Ariadna Ediciones, pp. 299-230.
64. Borrego, *Che en la Revolución Cubana*, Vol. VI, *passim*.
65. Borrego, Vol. IV, p. 390.
66. Heberto Padilla, *La mala memoria*, s/l, Hypermedia, 2018, p. 107.
67. Padilla, p. 108.
68. Jorge Castañeda, *La vida en rojo. Una biografía del Che Guevara*, Barcelona, ABC, 2003.
69. Farber, 2016, p. 16.
70. Luis Simón, "Mis relaciones con el Che Guevara," Paris, *Cuadernos* (N° 60), 1962. Cited by Pierre Kalfon, *Che, Ernesto Guevara, une légende du siècle*, Paris, Seuil, 1997.
71. Guevara, *Apuntes críticos a la economía*, p. 214.
72. Farber, 2016, p. 135, note 8.
73. Farber, 2016, p. 72.
74. One example is Jacobo Machover — who Farber quotes on p. 15 — whose implacable opposition to the Cuban Revolution has led him to deny the destructive impact of U.S. sanctions against Cuba.
75. There are countless accounts by former guerrillas that we have assembled — some of them are in a film by Maurice Dugowson, as well as in the book by Pierre Kalfon — which contradict these claims.
76. Ernesto Guevara, *El Diario del Che en Bolivia* (Prólogo de Fidel Castro), Madrid, Siglo XXI de España Editores (33ª edición), 2003, p. 166.
77. Farber, 2016, p. 143, note 26.
78. Fabien Augier, *Souvenirs d'un guérillero tendre, Luis Alberto Lavandeyra, le lieutenant français de Che Guevara*, Paris, Les Indes savantes, 2022.
79. Farber, 2016, p. 42.
80. Borrego, *Che en la Revolución Cubana*, Vol. VI, p. 428.
81. Dumont, p. 51.
82. Dumont, p. 51.

83. K. S. Karol, *Les guerrilleros au pouvoir*, Paris, Robert Laffont, 1970, p. 331.
84. Preface by François Maspero to the new edition of *Journal de Bolivie*, Paris, Maspero, 1995.
85. Farber, 2016, p. 44.
86. Bolivian Trotskyism was divided in two organizations, the POR of Guillermo Lora and the POR-Combate of Hugo González Moscoso (4th International), both of which supported the guerrillas. There were also two communist parties, that of Mario Monje (Partido Comunista de Bolivia - PCB), pro-Moscow, and that of Óscar Zamora (Partido Comunista de Bolivia (Marxista-Leninista) — PCB(ML)), pro-Chinese.
87. Rubén Vázquez Díaz, *Bolivia a la hora del Che*, México, Siglo XXI Editores, 1978 (4th edition), p. 162. See also, Carlos Soria Galvarro, José Pimentel Castillo y Eduardo García Cárdenas 1967: *San Juan a sangre y fuego*, La Paz, Punto de Encuentro, 2008, pp. 264.
88. Vázquez Díaz, p. 162.
89. Vázquez Díaz, p. 162.
90. Soria Galvarro *et al*.
91. Soria Galvarro *et al*, p. 181.
92. Soria Galvarro *et al*, pp.148-149.
93. Soria Galvarro *et al*, pp.155.
94. Soria Galvarro *et al*, p. 17.
95. René Zavaleta Mercado, “Debemos organizar la resistencia armada” (Interview, 1967), in *Escritos sociológicos y políticos*, Cochabamba, Serie del Pensamiento Latinoamericano, 1986, pp. 9-12.
96. Farber, 2016, p. 52, p. xx.
97. Guevara, *Diario de Bolivia*, p. 285.
98. Guevara, *Diario de Bolivia*, p. 286.
99. Farber, 2016, p. 119.
100. Farber, 2016, p. xv.
101. Farber, 2016, p. xvi.
102. Enrique Oltuski, *Gente del llano*, Havana, Imagen Contemporánea, 2001, p. 13.
103. Fernando Martínez Heredia, *Pensar al Che*, Havana, CEA/Editorial José Martí, 1989-1992, tome I, p. 357.
104. Farber, 2016, p. 118.
105. Dumont, p. 236.

^Atranslator's note: The French translation of this quote suggests that Che was educated in the Stalinist tradition. The English original just indicates that the Marxism available at the time was mainly of a Stalinist sort. "Le Che avait au contraire grandi dans la tradition politique du marxisme stalinisé."

^Btranslator's note: The French translation puts the PSP as playing a DECISIVE role: "*joué un rôle déterminant dans le processus révolutionnaire.*" This is not the same as playing "an integral part," which is what the original in English says.

^Ctranslator's note: The original, "no important PSP figure." is not quite the same as the French, "aucun membre important du PSP." The difference detracts from the irony in the following paragraph.

^Dtranslator's note: Another change of emphasis in the French translation: "Guevara's politics were closer to the ultraleftist militancy of the Communist International's so-called Third Period" is not the same as "Le marxisme du Che serait l'équivalent du communisme stalinien de la Troisième Période."

^Etranslator's note: Again, the French translation by Syllepse differs from the original in English.

^Ftranslator's note: The French translation, "soutenaient le régime de parti unique," could imply support for the principle of a one-party state. The original English seems to refer more to support for the revolutionary government (against those attacking it).

^Gtranslator's note: the French version says: "le corps expéditionnaire (sic) du Che en Bolivie va se montrer incapable d'obtenir le soutien de la gauche bolivienne," which suggests there was no political support, in the sense of political sympathy and approval. That is not the same as "an effective supportive relationship," which refers more to the provision of practical, logistical support.

^Htranslator's note: Here too, the French translation differs from Farber's original in English.