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Kimberley District**



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OF THE PROLETARIAT

**CHE
REVOLUTION**



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Most significant Revolutionary

By Chris Matlhako



“Che Guevara ranks as one of the most significant revolutionaries of the 20th century.”

This is the 50th year of the cowardly assassination of Ernesto 'Che' Guevara de la Serna at the hands of the Bolivian Army in Vallegrande. The then rightwing Bolivian army, working in concert with the CIA, had hounded Che Guevara's group for days, upon getting wind of its whereabouts in the area. Che Guevara was leading a small group of insurgents, his second 'mission,' in Bolivia after the unsuccessful mission in Congo.

After rising to power in Fidel Castro's revolutionary government, Che Guevara attained international status as spokesperson for radical social progress. His manual, 'Che Guevara Warfare,' introduced the foco theory of revolutions and remains one of the classic dissertations on guerrilla warfare. Death in the Bolivian jungles has failed to diminish Che Guevara's reputation. 'Che Lives!' remains the resounding call for revolutionaries throughout the world today.

Che Guevara in Bolivia:

On the 9th of October 1967, the already wounded Che Guevara was shot dead by a member of an elite Bolivian army unit in the remote village of La Higuera, bringing to an end the story of one of the world's most famous revolutionaries - so they thought that by killing him they'll obliterate

his ideas. However, as it would turn out Che Guevara's famous photo - the stare and the beret with the star will become the symbol of resistance and rebellion across the world.

Che Guevara, the guerrilla, a man who was once sensitive, passionate was determined to pursue his socialist dreams to their conclusion.

In Cuba, the 8th of October has since become known as 'the Day of the Heroic Guerrilla' in honour of Che Guevara. On the night of October 18, in Havana's Plaza de la Revolucion, Fidel Castro spoke to probably one of the largest-ever audiences. Nearly, a million people had gathered in

a national wake for Che Guevara. His voice raspy with emotion, Fidel rendered an impassioned tribute to his old comrade, extolling him as the incarnation of revolutionary virtue. "If we want the model of a human being who does not belong to our time but to the future, I say from the depths of my heart that such a model, without a single stain on

his conduct, without a single stain on his behaviour, is Che! If we wish to express what we want our children to be, we must say from our very hearts as ardent revolutionaries: we want them to be like Che!" said Fidel.

Che Guevara, the immensely practical man of action, acknowledged the potency of dreams. He said, "And if it were said of us that we're almost romantics, that we are incorrigible idealists, that we think the impossible; then a thousand and one times we have to answer that yes, we are."

“Che Guevara attained international status as spokesperson for radical social progress.”



Ernesto Guevara de la Serna, later to become known the world over as 'Che,' was born in Argentina in the late 1920's. He was only 8 years old when the Spanish Civil War began and 11 at the outbreak of the 2nd World War. In fact, Che Guevara's school years coincided with a period when strong nationalists and leftwing political movements were emerging in Argentina and throughout Latin America. This would also coincide with the period when armed struggles for independence were emerging in colonies and semi-colonies of Africa and Asia. At university and until his death in 1967 in Bolivia, where he was leading a guerrilla campaign, Che Guevara devoted himself to the political and economic independence for countries of 'Our America' and other countries of what became known as the 'Third World.'

In Mexico in 1956 - after witnessing the brutal overthrow all of the democratically elected president of Guatemala, Jacobo Arbenz, Che Guevara joined a small group of Cuban exiles under the leadership of Fidel Castro to launch an invasion of Cuba. They waged a guerrilla campaign, that two years later, was instrumental in the overthrow of the dictatorial regime of Fulgencio Batista. Cuba, which at the time had a population of 5 million shared its colonial past with the rest of Latin America, which according to the United States of America successive governments, was regarded as their 'backyard.' Having won independence from Spain in 1898, Cuba never enjoyed full political independence, since after it became a semi-colonial protectorate of the United State.

By the 1950's the Cuban economy was dominated by large United State's corporations and US mafia bosses, to whom the government was beholden. During that period, a number of organisations emerged to challenge the corruption of the Batista regime. The most audacious of these was the July 26 Movement, inspired by the 1953 attack on the Moncada Barracks in Santiago de Cuba by a group led by Fidel Castro.

The entry into Havana after the triumph of the revolution, of the guerrillas at the beginning of

January 1959 was the beginning, not the end, of the story. Beyond the immediate tasks of establishing a new government and ensuring the security of the country lay the fundamental issue of satisfying the social and economic aspirations that the struggle against Batista had awakened. Fidel Castro played out his hand of the reforming nationalist leader who was going to clean up the corruption of the old regime, taking care not to arouse the suspicions and hostility the US government. He made a first trip to the US in April 1959, during which he met with vice-president Richard Nixon. Che Guevara, like Fidel Castro, had always been convinced that the North Americans would eventually be hostile to the Revolution. They had, after all, armed and

“Che Guevara developed a thirst for adventure,... fueled by a desire to understand the social conditions...”

supported Batista until the last months of the war and he had witnessed first-hand how they had crushed the government of Jacobo Arbenz in Guatemala in 1954.

In June, Che Guevara was sent abroad as Cuba's ambassador at large to establish relations with other countries of the 'non-aligned' Third World. He was away for three months and visited 12 countries. He met President Nasser in Egypt, Prime Minister Nehru in India, President Tito in Yugoslavia and President Sukarno in Indonesia. He also

visited Japan where he was impressed at how a nation without oil or other strategic raw materials was able to industrialize rapidly following agrarian reform.

On his return Che Guevara was put in charge of industrialization within the National Institute of Agrarian Reform, then in November he was made President of the Central Bank, with remit of overseeing plans for economic development of the country. The following month he signed the agrarian reform law which expropriated farms of more than 400 hectares. This meant nationalizing the holdings of US monopolies such as United Fruit Company, with four percent bonds over 20 years compensation.

As a young man Che Guevara developed a thirst for adventure, which increasingly became fueled by a desire to understand the social conditions of



the poor of Latin America. The experience of traveling with little money and taking jobs along the way, brought Che Guevara into close contact with the peoples of the South American continent and forged his belief in the goal of a united America. Throughout the trips he kept a diary of his impressions, as he was to do for the rest of his life. Or his travels through the continent has remarked; "This journey has only served to confirm the belief, that the division of America into unstable and illusionary nations is a complete fiction. We are one single mestizo race with remarkable ethnographical similarities, from Mexico down to the Magellan Straits."

"When I began to study medicine most of the concepts I now have as a revolutionary were then absent from my warehouse of ideals. I wanted to be successful, as everyone does. I used to dream of being a famous researcher, of working tirelessly to achieve something that could, decidedly, be placed at the service of mankind, but which was at that time all about personal triumph. I was, as we all are, a product of my environment," Che Guevara.

Important lessons of Che Guevara's life - writes James Cockcroft:

- It must be borne in mind that Che Guevara and Fidel Castro were young revolutionaries at the crucial period of the Cuban Revolution and contributed immensely to the transformation of that society and world revolutionary theories. Fidel Castro, age 33, and Che Guevara, age 31, set about trying to establish in 1959 in the face of ongoing US aggression, abetted by diehard supporters of the overthrown Batista dictatorship - and now some 58 years later, by maintenance of the economic blockade, control over Guantanamo, acts of terrorism, military threats, a sophisticated cultural offensive and budgeting of 'dissidents' (mercenaries), CIA agents and NGOs inside Cuba, not to mention the mendacious slander spewed forth by the mass media of disinformation, including some of the social media, socialist Cuba continues to defy the odds and continues to be an example of human resilience and internationalism.

- Che Guevara understood the centrality of poli-

"To make a world without war possible, Che Guevara gave his life, even Fidel Castro did."

tics impelled by ethics where subjective factors prevail, leading to rapid conversion of Cuban society into a giant school of reclaiming Cuban culture and ethical values - hence the literacy and 'voluntary labour' campaigns, the advances in education, medicine, people's participation, agrarian reform, housing reform and so on that converted idealistic goals based largely on the thoughts of Jose Marti, Julio Antonio Mella, Guiteras and other revolutionaries in Cuban history into evolving on-the-ground realities that even in one's wildest dreams had never appeared possible.

- Rejecting the use of capitalist methods to fight capitalism, Che Guevara and Fidel Castro used Marxism-Leninism to implement the maximum possible option; make a socialist revolution of national liberation that would transform institutions and social and human rela-

tions through an organized and conscious 'praxis' that - despite errors recognized publicly by each of them and their successors - continues today.

- As known at the time and revealed in collections of Che Guevara's writings after his assassination ordered by the CIA, Che

Guevara repeatedly warned about the dangers of not seeing the deficiencies of 'existing socialism' and of mechanically copying Soviet manuals and methods, observing that the 'intransigent dogmatism of the Stalin era has been succeeded by an inconsistent pragmatism... returning to capitalism.' He saw the actions and proposals of the Cuban Revolution as 'clashing with what one reads in [Soviet] textbooks' and contributed insightful Marxist critique of both capitalist and socialist societies and theories.

- Che Guevara like Fidel Castro, was profoundly committed to the cause of peace, but unfortunately had to take up arms to move the world closer to that ephemeral goal. To make a world without war possible, Che Guevara gave his life, even Fidel Castro did. We can learn from their examples.

Cde Chris Matlhako is the SACP 2nd Deputy General Secretary



Still a Revolutionary icon

By Allister Jack



“We socialists are freer because we are more fulfilled; we are more fulfilled because we are freer. The skeleton of our complete freedom is already formed. The flesh and the clothing are lacking; we will create them. Our freedom and its daily sustenance are paid for in blood and sacrifice. Our sacrifice is a conscious one: an instalment paid on the freedom that we are building. The road is long and, in part, unknown.”

Che Guevara devoted his life and time to advance socialism in the Latin American countries and he did it well in all his writings and his daily deliberations in his work with communities and government. Across the world today you will see the face of Che and his quotes on t-shirts and walls, and indeed his spirit is alive and open minded people let his legacy live on. After 50 years of his cowardly death, people all over the world still celebrate the life and time of this gallant freedom fighter and communist. If one follows Che's days when he left the university as a qualified doctor of medicine till his death as a freedom fighter, it was a long and hard road, but Che mastered the love for humanity. He was a hated man by the imperialists and their cruel systems, but he made his mark in life and today Cuba and other Latin American countries are the manifestation of it.

As an Argentinian, he left his country of birth to help other people in the region and to get a bet-

ter understanding of humanity. Ernesto "Che" Guevara was a legend who stood his ground through the difficulties of life, and a man with a heroic consciousness.

This year Che would have been 89 years old, but due to the love for humanity and the advancement of socialism his life was brutally cut short by narrow minded men who praised imperialist masters and who thought that after assassinating Che they would be heroes. Instead Che and his legacy was lifted up and are still relevant today. During his lifetime he made sure he got a deeper understanding of humanity and what was best for his people beside the imperialist systems that was forced unto them by a few elites. The imperialist masters tried to frame Che as a murderer

“During his lifetime he made sure he got a deeper understanding of humanity and what was best for his people...”

after his death, but they couldn't convince the world. Instead the imperialist masters lost the battle and made Che a hero and gallant legend, his ideology still lives on and we follow it today and future generations to come will still follow it. His death made revolutionaries stronger over the world and today his legacy is still fashionable and quotable.

A history worth celebrating:

Revolutionaries, countries and governments the world over will celebrate the life and time of Che, the great revolutionary. Revolutionaries over the world did indeed took a leaf from the writings of Che. Cuba today have evolved into an advance school of socialism. His tours, during his student years and after becoming a qualified doctor, in the Latin American



countries, where he experienced the different illnesses and diseases of the region was a real investment into the field of medicine for the Cubans over the years. His first hand experience of the imperialist system defeating the Guatemalan leftist regime during the 1950's gave Che an understanding in how the American government don't want socialism in the region to be successful.

Ernesto Che Guevara, took a conscious decision to help the Cuban Revolutionaries under the command of Fidel

Castro and he shared all his past experiences on how to defeat a cruel Batista system. Indeed Che was correct when he said socialists are freer and more fulfilled because he had travelled and studied humanity by being amongst the peasants and proletariats. Che took all his knowledge he consumed and shared it with his Cuban Revolutionary brothers and the world. With the dawn of freedom in Cuba the revolutionary guard implemented socialism without the blink of an eye. Socialism has the primary focus to restore humanity and the revolutionary government didn't hesitate to restore it. In his short period of being part of the socialist revolution in Cuba he achieved a lot in advancing the lives of ordinary people in the region. He implemented and shared his knowledge with people and they loved him for that. He was as much a practical Marxist as he was a theoretical Marxist at the time, because he could analyze a situation at hand. Under the economic embargo that was imposed on the Socialist Cuba, Che and Fidel managed to build a society of excellence with the limited resources that they had. A combined knowledge of Marxism between Che and Fidel and all other revolutionaries was a blessing to the world in building a socialist socie-



ty. As communists of the world we can take pride in the life and writings of Che Guevara, he perfected his own teachings over and over. Che walked amongst world giants at his time, the imperialist system when they couldn't defeat his

doctrine they used the media and other writings to show that he was a brutal and forgot to show the world how brutal the system was they wanted to impose on society. It took a short time for Che to understand the ups and downs of what the cruel system imperialism was, and

how the western world tried to use it to oppress the masses in the Latin American countries and in the rest of the world who wanted to introduce socialism.

As communists we must always defend the legacy of Che Guevara the world over, we must never let the imperialist world use any space to bad mouth the achievements he gained through his practical experiences during his quest to better the world. His passion towards socialism, must serve as an inspiration to the youth throughout the world. We must use his writings and experiences to guide us in our personal quest to perfect socialism in our lifetime. Let us as communists of the world bring honor to his words when Che said "The party is a living example; its cadres must teach hard work and sacrifice. By their action, they must lead the masses to the completion of the revolutionary task, which involves years of hard struggle against the difficulties of construction, class enemies, the maladies of the past, and imperialism." His death didn't stop his beliefs, his legacy lives on. HASTA LA VICTORIA SIEMPRE, UNTIL VICTORY, ALWAYS.

"As communists of the world we can take pride in the life and writings of Che Guevara, he perfected his own teachings over and over."

Cde Allister Jack is the SACP Northern Cape 1st Deputy Provincial Secretary



Backbone of the Revolution

By OJ Fourie



“Che has been an example of the kind of cadre that any revolution needs to succeed. Today, he also serves as an example of the kind of cadre that the Alliance need in South Africa to overcome its current challenges.”

Ernesto Guevara, Che as he is affectionately known, has become a symbol of freedom and human rights around the world. He has been and still is a beacon of hope for millions of people who live under oppressive regimes and who are fighting for a better life.

One of the published writings of Che Guevara is “The Cadres: Backbone of the Revolution,” (1962) in it he raised very important points with regards to type of cadre needed to lead a successful revolution. Some of the points that he raised are still very relevant to our current condition in South Africa and I would like to reflect on some.

In his opening remarks Che notes the following: “When it became clear that a new social class had definitely taken power in Cuba, the great limitations which the exercise of state power would encounter because of the existing conditions in the state became evident: the lack of cadres to cope with the enormous tasks which had to be carried out in the state apparatus, in political organisation, and on the entire economic front.”

It remains critical that we need to deploy capable cadres into government positions that can cope with the tasks of effectively using state ap-

paratus to serve the people of the country and not serve selfish interests. Deployment has unfortunately been misused as a shortcut to prosperity at the cost of poverty for others. One positive step forward that the ANC can take is to ensure that elective councillors must have a minimum required level of education.

Che elaborated on the challenges of wrongful deployment when he said that deployees become “totally separated from the masses, which became recognised as a springboard for promotions and for bureaucratic posts of major or minor importance.”

Che continues by asking a very fundamental question: “we can ask ourselves what a cadre type is.” In this writing he answers his own question as follows:

“It remains critical that we need to deploy capable cadres...”

“We should say that a cadre person is an individual who has achieved sufficient political development to be able to interpret the extensive directives emanating from the central power, make them his, and convey them as orientation to the masses, a person who at the same time also perceives the signs manifested by the masses of their own desires and their innermost motivations. He is an individual of ideological and administrative discipline, who knows and practices democratic centralism and who knows how to evaluate the existing contradictions in this method and to utilise fully its many facets; who knows how to practice the principle of collective discussion and to make decisions on his own and take responsibility in production; whose loyalty is tested, and whose physical and



moral courage has developed along with his ideological development in such a way that he is always willing to confront any conflict and to give his life for the good of the revolution. Also, he is an individual capable of self-analysis, which enables him to make the necessary decisions and to exercise creative initiative in such a manner that it won't conflict with discipline. Therefore the cadre person is creative, a leader of high standing, a technician with a good political level, who by reasoning dialectically can advance his sector of production, or develop the masses from his position of political leadership. This exemplary human being, apparently cloaked in difficult-to-achieve virtues, is nonetheless present among the people of Cuba, and we find him daily. The essential thing is to grasp all the opportunities that there are for developing him to the maximum, for educating him, for drawing from each personality the greatest usefulness and converting it into the greatest advantage for the nation."

Besides the above mentioned virtues, discipline and the important characteristics of a true cadre that Che is referring to; it remains pivotal that, as an individual cadre, you render yourself useful to the revolution and not useless. The only way in which you can render yourself useful is when you make use of all possible opportunities to skill and develop yourself through various means in order to play a more constructive part wherever you find yourself in society.

We need skilled cadres in various fields in order to ensure that we bring excellence in what we do and in order to ensure that we move South Africa forward. Che speaks of this when he wrote: "...to assure the triumph and the total consolidation of the revolution, we have to develop different types of cadres: the political cadre... we also need military cadres... professionals... create an administrative team. These companeros should be selected from the masses solely by application of the principle that the best will come to the fore and that the best should be given the greatest opportunities for development."

SACP Kimberley District

"The development of the cadres has been undertaken with great eagerness by the revolutionary government..."

Che further elaborates on this by writing: "Therefore, the development of cadres is now a task which cannot be postponed. The development of the cadres has been undertaken with great eagerness by the revolutionary government with its programs of scholarships based on selective principles; with its programs of study for workers, offering various opportunities for technological development; with the development of the special technical schools; with the development of the secondary schools and the universities, opening new careers; with the development finally of our slogans of study, work and revolutionary vigilance for our entire country." The important aspect of developing cadres cannot be emphasised enough. The ANC led-government has been doing a lot in this regard. For example, the Northern Cape for the first time has its own university which is even changing the landscape of Kimberley, but will it be able to change the mind-set of young people to become "other-centred" rather than "self-centred." Che Guevara led by example. Throughout the Cuban Revolution (1956 – 1959) he fought alongside soldiers from start to finish. He knew first-hand what it meant to sacrifice for something that you believe in, to sacrifice for something that will improve the lives of millions. Therefore he could write: "Intimately tied to the concept of cadre is the capacity

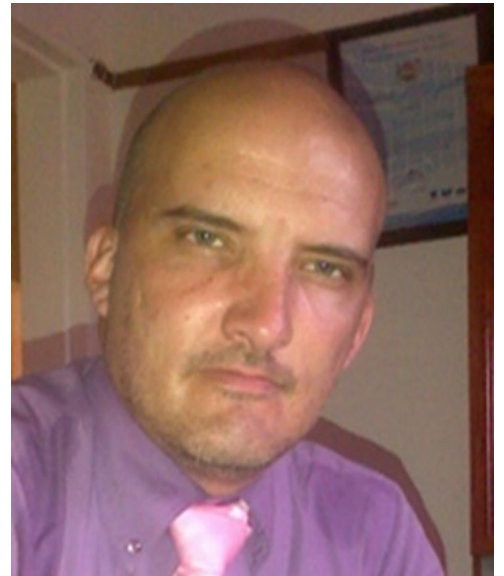
for sacrifice, for demonstrating through personal example the truths and watchwords of the revolution. The cadres, as political leaders, should gain the respect of the workers by their actions. It is absolutely imperative that they count on the respect and affection of their companeros, whom they should guide along the vanguard paths." It is vital that leaders must lead by example and earn respect. We salute you Ernesto Che Guevara for sacrificing your life for a better, more humane, world. May we also have the courage of our conviction to fight for a better and just world. Long live the revolutionary spirit of Che Guevara long live!

Cde OJ Fourie is the SACP Kimberley District Deputy District Secretary



50 Years later and still Relevant

By Quentin von Berg



“On October 09, 2017 it will be 50 years since Ernesto Che Guevara took his last breath in Bolivia, before becoming another martyr in the continuing struggle against class and the exploitation of the majority by a select few.”

The image of Che Guevara is probably the most known image on earth. Christians are disputed about the correctness of wearing the image of Jesus (and even what the actual image may be) in any fashion. Muslims surely do not display the image of Muhammed. Sport fans does not agree on whom is the best sport person ever, and in this regard many different images compete. Political images compete all over the world for relevance. The list regarding possible images of famous people can continue indefinitely.

But what image do we all know as the image of revolution? Similarly what image do the youth identify with as an image that reflect “rebellion” against the establishment, social ills, exploitation, etc. Whether you have grown up with socialist or capitalist ideas, we all at some stage wore, wanted to wear or at least have seen the image of Che Guevara.

The question should be asked: Other than consumerism and popular sentiment, does what Che Guevara fought for while he lived and ultimately died for, have relevance today? Is there any lessons from his life and the struggle and revolution he took part in that are relevant today or is he just a popular image that many like to wear, and little else?

A lot has been written about his life, but how does it apply today? Although it is safe to say that history never repeat itself exactly in the same fashion as before, one should still draw lessons from the revolutionaries that were involved in previous struggles and revolutions if we would ever want to be successful in our fight for socialism.

What then are the lessons we can learn from Che Guevara?

When taking into consideration his youth, he grew up in a rather affluent family that had Spanish and Irish nobility in their lineage. He could easily have set back and enjoyed his days in relative luxury, not effected by the struggle of his fellow man, but he chose not to. In this is the first very important lesson that we can learn from Che – even when we are in an affluent position as an individual, we should not be

“...we should not be unaffected by the plight of our fellow man.”

unaffected by the plight of our fellow man. We should know that our individual situation can never be seen as sorted or good while our fellow man is still hungry, trapped in poverty and exploited.

As a child he was afflicted by asthma which first surfaced when his mother took him with her as a little boy while she was swimming. His asthmatic condition was very severe and afflicted his life in many ways. He could not do sport and was often bedridden. He had legitimate reason to claim that he could not do certain things but instead he made this weakness a strength – when bedridden he read profusely, later at school he partook in rugby, and as a revolutionary he became one



of the most influential guerrilla warfare commanders of all time. All these feats being especially remarkable when considering that medically they were not possible for him. Again a lesson that could be learned from him by all of humanity that no matter what challenges you may face you should not be defined by you challenges but that you should turn your weaknesses into strengths.

His battle with asthma is what inspired him to become a doctor. His view was that this would enable him to relieve the plight of others suffering from the same affliction he had. Instead of complaining and feeling sorry for himself he looked at ways of ensuring others never suffer from what afflicted him. Even at this young age the element of selflessness was already evident in the manner he planned his future career.

Another aspect we can learn from Che as a child was the manner in which he entrenched himself in the writings of Engels, Marx and Lenin as a

boy. When we look at our modern children and youth with all the access they have to information, it is alarming to note the content they would prefer to read. They would rather engage in gossip mongering, jokes, idle activities, social ills and games. After engaging in these material and activities they will partake in bad mouthing the government of the day, at times correctly, but without the theoretical base

regarding that which they are criticising or possible political alternatives. This gives rise to populist rhetoric gaining momentum. Populism eventually degenerate into tribalism, ethnicism, racism, etc. and never have any positive result in the long run.

The children and youth of today would be well advised by the example of Che – read about the political ideologies that exist and get an informed theoretical position regarding the views and believes they may have. There are few things as dangerous as practice without theory and today the children and youth are by enlarge without theoretical political base. As the SACP we would be well advised to get our youth more engaged in reading content with substance, instead of allowing the westernisation and capitalisation of their thoughts via popular content forced up-

on them via popular media without our input. We should provide alternative content on various existing platforms such as social media, television, pamphlets, and brochures that deal with issues that are topical to the youth.

In 1950, the young Ernesto Guevara travelled throughout Argentina and twice throughout Latin America between 1952 and 1954. During this period he engage a lot with the peasants, indigenous people and workers. He was deeply touched by the exploitation, underdeveloped state and mere destruction of Latin America's indigenous people and their culture (similarities could be drawn with the current struggles of the Khoisan communities in South Africa). While many may see this as mere travelling and sight-seeing, the lesson to be learned would be that we should be in touch with the community. A huge danger today is that many activists speak a lot about 'the people' without having any connection with the people. It is unrealistic to sit in a

“...similarities could be drawn with the current struggles of the Khoisan communities in South Africa.”

comfortable office and house while expecting to be in unison with people experiencing the extreme conditions that our people are faced with on a day-to-day basis.

He developed an understanding of conditions that the majority of the people found themselves in and experienced the effects of exploitation first hand. Trying to assist people medically in conditions that was ravaged by poverty had a lasting impact on the young Ernesto Guevara. The exploitation of the land and the people that were supposed to benefit from it, made a huge contribution to the thoughts developing in a young Che. We should never allow ourselves to be left cold to the realities of the people around us. We should mobilise people to join programmes such as 'Know and act in your neighbourhood' to allow them not only to hear about challenges facing our communities, but also to experience these conditions first-hand. After this we should encourage those same people to assist the community in their conditions so as to trench the reality of how difficult it can become to apply theoretical solutions in practice where exploitation, inequality, unemployment and poverty, are at the order of the day.

Ernesto Guevara did not become immediately



politically active or express himself as Marxist from the onset. He first familiarised himself with the material conditions at grassroots level throughout Latin America. The moment that he decided that he would become politically active and take the revolutionary route, he was committed for life. While there is nothing wrong in becoming an active politician at a young age and it should be commended, what should be learned from Guevara is that once a political path is chosen one should stay committed to that particular cause, path or political ideology. In the South African context all too often we witness so called revolutionaries that form new political formations that splinter

even further if certain views do not get expression. Other politicians or activists hop from one party to the other or one ideology to the other. Similarly some politicians and activists act contrary to the policy position of their party based on the fact that they have become untouchable cult personalities. What should we learn from the revolutionary life of Che Guevara?: the moment he committed himself to the revolution aimed at the upliftment of those

less fortunate than himself, he never looked back. It was a struggle that he wanted to see realised worldwide emancipating all people, for the benefit of all people. In South Africa we

use terms that sound revolutionary such as Radical Economic Transformation and Broad Based Black Economic Empowerment amongst others, but in reality we should ask ourselves in whose benefit are these interventions.

Although not being Cuban by birth, Che Guevara joined the revolutionary struggle in that country with so much vigour and conviction that until today he is synonymous with the Cuban Revolution. While starting the revolution with only 82 men that was initially defeated and diminished to only 22, they rapidly grew in support from mainly the peasants and illiterate rural community in Cuba, which at the time was the vast ma-

jority. In the early days of the revolution Che, as Ernesto was now known, dropped his medical supplies to rather carry ammunition to continue in the struggle. In this period Che became a student of Guerilla warfare tactics, which had the advantage that small numbers of men could out



manoeuvre numerically larger enemies and severely hamper them by focussing their offensives on strategically critical points of the enemy. Che became arguably the most effective guerilla warfare commander and tactical implementer of the modern era. He was the battlefield commander of the most important military victory of the entire revolution, in the Battle of Santa Clara on January 1, 1959.

The lesson being that when correct strategies are being formulated and correctly implemented a small number of people and interventions can outsmart and resolve even the biggest challenges, in whatever field we may apply them. Till this day the writings of Che Guevara on Guerilla Warfare is often consulted by strategists and military leaders all over the world.

Upon victory he rose to prominent governmental

“In the South African context all too often we witness so called revolutionaries...”

positions within Cuba. He was amongst other the Finance minister, the President of the National Bank, and responsible for speeding up land and agrarian reform. One of his primary concerns was to focus more atten-

tion on literacy which under his influence increased from between 60%–76% to 96%. He was also very concerned with education in the country and he was instrumental in having 1961 as ‘the year of education’ in Cuba. He strived to improve access to education in of Cuba, and the legacy of these interventions is still felt worldwide today, especially in engineering and the medical fraternity.

In South Africa we are not doing very well in educational terms at the moment. Our schools are plagued by violence, ill-discipline and teenage pregnancies, while we are some of the worst performers in terms of Mathematics and Science.



Since one of our focal areas are that the means of production should be in the hands of the proletariat, we would do well to ensure that our curriculum at school level address the needs of a secondary economy. At the moment we create a climate in which our children will be exploited by the next capitalist generation. Our current curriculum reinforce a primary economy that is based on the extraction and selling of our minerals. We should rather focus on developing the skills among the youth at school level to ensure that we can use our primary resources to produce goods that can be sold for higher monetary value. We should learn from the Cuban Educational process pioneered by Che, to benefit all of our youth and the country's economy.

Having won the revolution and having put the building blocks for socialism in Cuba in place, Che realised the revolution had to be expanded internationally. He was opposed to the Stalinist concept of "Socialism in one Country" and raised his views openly even when criticised as 'anti-Russian' and Trotskyist. The lesson we can learn is that even when the principle you are fighting for may not be popular, you should have the moral conviction in your position not only to proclaim it despite possible opposition, but also to use all available platforms and media to defend it. Che would write profusely and left his thoughts for the generations to come to consult and debate. We still benefit from his thoughts daily. A clear example was the manner in which he signed his writings: "Hasta la Victoria Siempre" which translates as always until victory, denoting the idea that we should never stop till our struggle for socialism is achieved. His one book, 'Motorcycle Diaries' which are chronicles of his first travels through Latin America, was made into a movie. We should likewise live an exemplary live, exposing our thoughts and convictions



to comment and critique thus, like Che, adding to socialist thought in general.

He believed that the revolution against capitalism should be taken all over the world and he tried this in the Congo and Bolivia. While this is noble and the quest for socialism should be international, he made a fundamental mistake in believing that the exact method followed in Cuba could be applied everywhere. He wanted the revolution to be implemented everywhere by the peasantry, which was especially bizarre taken into account the interactions he had with the Bolivian mine workers in the 1950's. From this we can de-

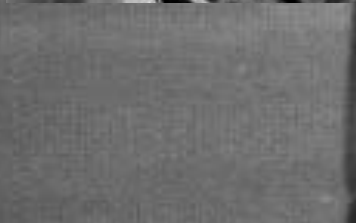
duce that all men have imperfections and that not all revolutions can be fought in the same manner. In South Africa we must keep abreast with the material conditions prevailing on the ground, and amend our revolutionary thrust where needed, in line with these realities. If we are not flexible and do not tactically adapt to the changing revolutionary battlefield, we will lose our fight, despite past victories, while there are still much to achieve.

"Hasta la Victoria Siempre"

In closing what are the main lessons we can learn from Che Guevara? He was utterly selfless, eventually even giving his life, and many current leaders whom seem to be utterly self-serving would do well to learn from him. All activists should bear in mind that our efforts should be for the communities that we serve and not to benefit only ourselves, while hiding behind revolutionary-sounding political jargon. We should also learn in earnest from his critical mistake that if we do not adapt to changing conditions, no matter how good and noble our intentions, our battle will end without ultimate victory despite the gains we may have made thus far. Hasta la Victoria siempre!!! Socialism is the future, build it now!

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