BOLIVIA

The Search for "Che" Guevara

In November 1995, Bolivian General Vargas Salinas gave U.S. journalist Jon Lee Anderson an interview, in which he claimed that the remains of Ernesto "Che" Guevara Lynch were buried under the landing strip of municipal airport at Vallegande, a town in the Department of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Che's corpse was taken to Vallegande and publicly exhibited there after he was executed in the neighbouring town of La Higuera on October 9th, 1967.

In response to this testimony, Bolivian President Gonzalo Sanchez de Lozada formed a Government Commission to investigate the events surrounding Che's death and to try to recover his remains. At the request of the Association of Families of the Disappeared and Martyrs for the National Liberation of Bolivia (ASOFAM), the Commission composed of civilian and military representatives from the Ministries of Government and Defense invited EAAF to participate in the search for the bodies of Che Guevara and his companions. The remains of five people who accompanied Che in Bolivia were found. El Che remained unfound.

ANTHROPOLOGY TEAM
Historical Background

Ernesto “Che” Guevara was born in Argentina, and studied medicine in Buenos Aires, where he graduated as a physician. In 1955 he joined Fidel Castro’s small group of revolutionaries in Mexico. During the fighting against Cuban dictator Fulgencio Batista, Guevara became the rebel army’s first military commander. After Castro’s rebel movement took power in Cuba following its victory over Batista in January 1959, Guevara was considered the second most powerful man in Cuba. Guevara was passionate about what he perceived as the need for Cuba to support guerrilla movements in Latin America and Africa. He tried unsuccessfully to establish or assist guerrilla movements in Argentina in 1964, and in the Belgian Congo in 1965. He then disappeared from public view.

“Shorn of his customary beard and beret and disguised as a middle aged Uruguayan economist, Guevara entered Bolivia in November 1966 and was joined by 50 or so Cuban, Argentine, Peruvian, and Bolivian guerrillas at a base in southeastern Bolivia’s tropical desert. There, he intended to train guerrillas from several countries to touch off a continental revolution. But Guevara’s effort was troubled since the beginning. Bolivia’s pro-Moscow Communist party, on which he depended for backing, withdrew its support. This was followed by desertions, betrayal to the army by suspicious peasants and the capture and death of key members of his group. And combat losses, sickness, fatigue and demoralization took a heavy toll. Alarmed of the presence of Guevara in Bolivia, Washington sent Special Forces experts to train a Bolivian battalion in antiguerilla techniques. Several agents of the Central Intelligence Agency were sent to assist in intelligence gathering.”

On October 8th, 1967, Che’s guerrilla column was ambushed in the Quebrada del Yuro by the Bolivian Army. Four guerrillas died in combat, or were assassinated in the ravine, the details of the incident varying in different accounts. Che and “Willi” (Simon Cuba Saravia, a Bolivian miner) were taken prisoner and carried to La Higuera, a village near Vallegrande. On the following day, General Rene Barrientos, then President of Bolivia, ordered Guevara’s execution. He and Simon Cuba were executed by the Bolivian army in the village school. On October 10, Guevara’s body was put on public display in the laundry house of a hospital in Vallegrande. Hundreds of locals went to see him, and photographers took pictures.

“On the night of October 10, the military ended the public spectacle by sealing off the hospital. The Bolivian government had decided to “disappear” Guevara’s body, apparently to deny him a burial

site that could become a place of public homage. But first, mindful of the lingering disbelief in Cuba and elsewhere at the reports of his death, steps were taken to preserve evidence of his identity. General Vargas Salinas said he witnessed the grisly events that followed: the making of a wax death mask of Guevara, the amputation of his hands by Argentinian agents and his nighttime burial.2

Argentinian agents checked his fingerprints against those on file in his native Argentina and confirmed the identification. The Bolivian soldiers took his body to a secret burial place. Many stories give different versions of what happened to Che Guevara’s remains: some say his body was dumped from an helicopter into the Bolivian jungle, others that he was cremated, or buried in one of many sites around Vallegande, in an individual or a mass grave.

Vargas Salinas, a retired General in the Bolivian Army who fought Che’s guerrilla group, told American journalist Jon Anderson, who is currently writing a biography of Che Guevara, that he was one of the three military officers who participated in the disposal of Che’s remains. This is not denied by any official sources.

After 28 years of silence, Vargas Salinas, decided to talk: “Enough time has passed, and it’s time the world knows,” he told Anderson. “He is buried under the airstrip of Vallegande.”3

The Role of the EAAF

Accompanied by members of the Government Commission, Vargas Salinas travelled to Vallegande and walked about the landing strip, but did not specify exactly where Guevara’s remains were buried. He said simply that he and other military personnel had interred them under the landing strip, or in the immediate vicinity, in a common grave on the night of October 11th, 1967. At the request of the Association of Families of the Disappeared and Martyrs for the national Liberation of Bolivia (ASOFAM), the Commission then invited EAAF to provide technical assistance in the investigation.

The bodies of most of the other guerrillas from Che’s company who died in combat or were executed in Bolivia had also never been found. Therefore, ASOFAM was also interested in recovering the remains of all the persons whose bodies had not been returned to their families in 1967. According to several historical accounts, the corpses of some of these persons had been buried together with Che’s remains. They are approximately 32 people:

Jesus Suarez Gayol, cuban; Eliseo Rodriguez Reyes, cuban; Antonio Sanchez Diaz, cuban; Jorge Vazquez Viana, bolivian; Carlo Coello, cuban; Jose Maria Martinez Tamayo, cuban; Raul Quispaya Choque, bolivian; Antonio Jimenez Tardio, bolivian; Juan Vitalio Acuna Nuñez, cuban; Israel Reyes Zayas, cuban; Apolinar Aquino Quispe, bolivian; Gustavo Machid Hoed Beche, cuban; Walter Arancibia Rodriguez, bolivian; Moises Guevara Rodriguez, bolivian; Tamara Haydee Bunke Bidder, argentine-german; Fredy Maimura Hurtado, bolivian; Jose Restituto Cabrera Flores, peruvian; Julio Velazco Montaño, bolivian; Roberto Peredo Leigue, bolivian; Manuel Hernandez Osorio, cuban; Mario Gutierrez Ardaya, bolivian; Orlando Pantoja Tamayo, cubano; Rene Martinez Tamayo, cuban; Alberto Fernandez Montes de Oca; Aniceto Reinaga Gordillo; Juan Pablo Chang Navarro, peruvians; Simon Cuba Saravia, cuban; Octavio Concepcion de la Pedraja, cuban; Jaime Arana Campero, bolivian; Fransisco Huanca Flores,

bolivian; Lucio Galvan Hidalgo, peruvian and Julio Luis Mendez Korne, bolivian.

The forensic investigation proceeded in four stages. The first stage lasted from November 29th to December 22nd 1995; the second stage took place from January 7th to February 15th, 1996; the third lasted from March 1st to March 31st, 1996, and the fourth stage lasted from the 21st to the 25th of June 1996. Members of the Government Commission and ASOFAM were present on an almost permanent basis during all stages of the investigation.

First Stage: The Identification of Jaime ‘Chapaco’ Arana Campero

The first stage began immediately after Gen. Vargas Salinas made his announcement. On November 29th, EAAF members Alejandro Inchaurregui and Anahi Ginarte travelled to Vallegrande. They were subsequently replaced by two other team members, Patricia Bernardi and Carlos Somigliana.

Dr. Jorge Gonzalez Perez, Director of the Legal Medicine Institute in Havana also joined the investigation as a representative of the families of the Cuban combatants who died during Che’s campaign in Bolivia, with the intention of identifying their remains and repatriating them to Cuba. Dr. Gonzalez participated in all the subsequent stages of the forensic investigation.

Two witnesses were also present during the investigation: a man who was supposedly the bulldozer operator who dug the grave where the bodies of Che and his companions were buried, and an old man from Vallegrande who had observed some of the events. On the basis of their testimony, EAAF delimited an area bordering the so-called old landing strip of the Vallegranda airport.

Because the demarcated area was quite large, EAAF decided to carry out a systematic geophysical survey, with the aim of delimiting areas to excavate. During the first and second stages of the project, the private Argentinian firm Area
Geofisica provided both equipment and personnel free of charge to aid the investigation. Giorgio Stangarino, engineering, Nestor Braido, engineering and Sergio Katabian, geophysic from Area Geofisica participated in this first stage. Through the use of a georadar, distinct anomalies in the geological strata of the terrain at depths of up to three meters were located. The georadar is a high resolution instrument that is capable of providing information about the subsoil of an area. It emits electromagnetic waves through an antenna placed on the surface of the area to be studied, and receives signals reflected back from under the ground through another antenna. This enables an investigator to survey the subsoil rapidly and without causing any destruction, and shows the location of structures, tombs, pipes, wells, and other natural and artificial discontinuities in the subsoil. 4

On the basis of information provided by Area Geofisica, EAAF dug test pits at each of the sites in the demarcated area where the georadar indicated the presence of anomalies. Unfortunately, excavations revealed that all the anomalies were the result of natural geological occurrences.

On the basis of other testimonies, test pits were then dug in another area, a site now occupied by the offices of the Agrarian Investigations Service, some 500 meters from the aerodrome. This effort also produced only negative results.

**Cañada de Arroyo:**
**The Identification of Jaime Arana Campero**

Mr. Vicente Zavala claimed that one night in 1967, at a site on the property known as Cañada de Arroyo, 5 km from Valle Grande, Army troops buried the bodies of guerrilla fighters.

On the 12th, 13th 16 and 17 of December EAAF members conducted excavations on the property of Mr. Zavala and recovered three human skeletons. These remains were studied in the Señor de Malta hospital in Valle Grande. At that point, it was possible only to identify one of the bodies, which was distinguished by an old or pre mortem lesion on the sixth right rib. This lesion was compatible with information provided by the family of Jaime Arana Campero. Years before, in 1958, Campero had undergone a surgical operation to remove a cyst from his right lung. This fact, together with pre mortem information of a more general character, allowed for the positive identification of the Bolivian Jaime Arana Campero, aged 29 years and known as "Chapaco", who died in the clash of "Cajones" on October 12th, 1967.

**Clash in Cajones**

After the capture and execution of Che and members of his group on October 8th 1967, the guerrillas who survived the Quebrada de Yuro incident, divided into two groups and travelled off in different directions. A few days later, on October 12th, the first group, composed of four survivors, was taken prisoner at the confluence of the Grande and Mizque rivers. According to Regis Debray 5, the group was executed immediately; according to military sources like Gary Prado 6 the four died in combat. The names of these four were: "El Moro" (Octavio Concepcion de la Pedraja, 32 years old, a Cuban military doctor), "Chapaco" (Jaime Arana Campero, a Bolivian and former Communist Youth member) "Eustaquio" (Lucio Galvan, 30 years old, a Peruvian guerrilla radio technician and a militant of the National Liberation Army) and "Pablito" (Fransisco Huanca, 22 years old, a young Bolivian peasant and student).

The remains of Jaime Arana Campero were returned to his family, who decided to reinter them at the cemetery of Tarija, the town where he came from.

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4. The electromagnetic georadar is principally constituted by a wide-band transmitter, and corresponding receiver. The instruments included were: SIR-System Principal Unit, with 14-bit A/D converter board; Color and/or Monochrome monitor; and various antennas, from 20 to 2,500 MHz.
5. Ibid, Anderson.
Second Stage

Five EAAF members participated in the second stage of the investigation: Patricia Bernardi, Luis Fondebrider, Mercedes Doretti, Anahi Ginarte and Silvana Turner. During this period no findings of human remains were made.

Area Geofisica's team and equipment was obtained again, in order to conduct further surveys.

From January 16th to March 25th 1996 three Cuban geophysicists from Geominera Geofisica of Cuba joined the project. These experts, specialists in radiostecst, gravimetry and seismology, were: Beatriz Rodriguez Basante, geophysical engineer and specialist in seismics at the Institute of Geology and Paleontology in Havana; engineer Jose Prol and engineer Leodegario Lurfiu. Their studies complemented and expanded upon those performed by the georadar team.

This stage of the work was characterized by the beginning of the systematization of the different historical versions provided by several witnesses and written sources, the geophysical inspection using different methods and the amplification of the excavation areas to areas marked by new testimonies and the geophysics teams.

The excavation areas were initially selected on the basis of historical accounts gathered at the beginning of the investigation that identified possible burial sites. These sites were located at the following places: the old and new airstrip; the terrain currently occupied by the National Road Services, the Rotary Club, the Center for the Study of Fruit Cultivation; and areas immediately in and outside the old and new cemetery.

Within these areas, specific zones were demarcated according to three criteria: 1) sites of anomalies registered by the georadar; 2) alterations identified by the Cuban geophysical team; and 3) sites or areas identified by historical versions collected during the investigation.

The Cuban geophysical team performed the following tasks. They studied the areas previously surveyed by the georadar and compared the results obtained by these different methods, and they expanded the survey in areas demarcated before. They also studied new areas such as a site within the Sr. de Malta Hospital and Cañada de Arroyo. In addition, they analyzed maps and aerial photographs to reconstruct certain features of the landscape as it was 30 years ago.

Cultural and Natural changes in the landscape

Almost 30 years have elapsed since the events under investigation took place, and the landmarks in the terrain which witnesses refer to in their account have changed substantially.

Topographic maps of the region and aerial photographs from the year 1959 and 1984 were obtained. By comparing these different sources it was possible to partially reconstruct the landscape as it appeared in 1967. The identification of landmarks in the rural terrain that by now have disappeared or undergone changes allowed the testimonies given by witnesses to be situated more precisely. Of particular significance was the fact that in those years the Pando Regiment post occupied the area on which the National Road Service, the Rotary Club, and The Center for the Study of Fruit Cultivation are now situated. Streets that crossed Pando’s military post no longer exist, while new roads have been opened as former parcels of land have been redivided.

The erosion that has occurred in the area is one of the principle natural forces that has modified the landscape. The geological fault in the area of the Rotary Club has advanced approximately 22 meters between 1967 and the present.

As part of its investigation into the history of the events of 1967, EAAF continued to compile witnesses' testimonies. These testimonies led to the identification of new areas to be surveyed and excavated. EAAF conducted numerous interviews with farmers, local residents, former soldiers, mechanics, and all other persons capable of providing relevant information. Then all information concerning the burial site of Ernesto
Guevara and his groups taken from the different accounts could be systematically compared. The information gathered from these sources was subsequently transferred to maps of each of the areas identified in witnesses’ testimonies. This made it possible to visualize more clearly the specific sites within the areas mentioned in the majority of the witnesses’ accounts. In some cases, the areas thus identified had already been excavated on the basis of information provided by the georadar, by the geophysical studies, or by stories collected before the information from witnesses’ accounts was systematized. In other cases, the historical accounts indicated new areas for geophysical exploration and excavation.

The search for family members of the victims who could provide information about the physical histories or their deceased relatives also continued.

The new zones delimited at the second stage for further investigation were:

a) The area adjacent to the north wall of the cemetery, bordering the Vallegranade airport; b) the old and current landing strips of the Vallegranade airport; c) the site currently occupied by the offices of the National Highway Services; d) and e) the site currently occupied by the offices of the Rotary Club; f) the site currently occupied by the regional Center for the Study of Fruit Cultivation; g) the interior of the new cemetery, which is currently in use; h) a fault partially located on the Rotary Club’s property; I) a structure that in previous years was used as a kitchen by the Pando regiment, located on the property currently used by the Technical University of Vallegranade (TVU); j) Cañada de Arroyo, a private property containing the site where four skeletons were found.

In December 1995, the EAAF began working on the southern side of the old airstrip and at the Center for the Study of Fruit Cultivation. During the second stage of the investigation, the georadar survey was expanded to zones A, B, C, and E. These zones were cleared and prepared for survey with georadar. The information obtained was analyzed in Buenos Aires and the coordinates from the areas showing anomalies were sent back to Vallegranade.

There were no findings of importance in any of the areas excavated. The points indicated by the georadar and geophysicist, until now, have all corresponded to alterations produced by natural or cultural causes, but did not convey to the finding of human remains. Between February 15th and March 1st, archaeological excavations were suspended, but geophysical surveys and historical research on the case continued.

Third stage

Through the month of March, three EAAF members, Anahi Ginarte, Dario Olmo and Patricia Bernardi, resumed excavations and the study of the remains that were retrieved.

The third stage of the excavation took place over smaller areas, much more clearly defined than in the previous phases, by excavating in the remaining sites presenting anomalies detected by the two teams of geophysicists and by historical data.

At the same time, excavations were conducted
## SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATIONS

<table>
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<th>Zone</th>
<th>Total excavated</th>
<th>No. surveyed by georadar</th>
<th>No. surveyed by geophys.</th>
<th>No. described by historical investigation</th>
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<td>4</td>
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in new areas identified by witnesses, such as the backyard of the Señor de Malta Hospital in Vallegande (where Che's body had been exhibited in the laundry room) and two areas of what used to be the Pando Regiment.

Work was also continued in Cañada de Arroyo, where a fourth skeleton was found inside a small fault near another site where the three previously exhumed bodies were found.

Summary of the archaeological excavations: Laboratory Analysis

The four human skeletons found in Cañada de Arroyo were analyzed to determine identity and cause of death. (See Table, p. 58) They correspond to four adult males, all of whom exhibited bullet wounds in the head thorax, upper limbs, and abdomen.

On the basis of the identification of Arana Campero, together with historical information, it was possible to establish hypotheses with respect to the identity of the remaining skeletons. In the absence of any significant premortem data for any of the three skeletons, bone samples were taken for genetic analysis. These were sent to Cuba, together with blood samples from two possible relatives of two of the dead. The third family has still not been contacted. Up till now, the comparison of the genetic material extracted from the bones and the blood samples has not been finished.

At the end of this stage, the Vallegrandina Committee was established. This committee petitioned the Government Committee for official recognition so that it could join the ongoing investigation.

The body of El Che on exhibit at the laundry room of the Señor de Malta Hospital in Vallegande.
Fourth Stage: Exhumation and Identification of Carlos Coello Coello, "Tuma"

According to data collected from different sources, Carlos Coello Coello, "Tuma", a lieutenant in the Cuban army, arrive in Bolivia in November 1966. He was fatally wounded in an ambush known as "La Poza" on June 26th, 1967, near the Piray river, department of Santa Cruz de la Sierra. Coello had been wounded in the abdomen and died while being operated on in a peasant's house.

His body was buried the next day by his companions. It was later discovered by army soldiers, who were unable to identify it. They subsequently reburied it in a nearby place known as Laguna Seca or Río Seco, close to the village of Florida, Department of Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

According to premortem physical data provided by his family from Cuba, "Tuma" had suffered an injury in his left elbow as a result of an accident.

Between March and June 1996, the Committee in charge of the historical research in La Paz located the person who had led the army into the area. After several visits to the site, the witness was able to locate the spot of the second grave.

The discovery of the bone remains occurred on June 16th, 1996, on the basis of additional information provided by the residents of Laguna Seca, 133 miles from the city of Santa Cruz de la Sierra, and 80 kilometers from the road which goes from Florida to Tejeria, in the mountain department of Santa Cruz de la Sierra.

Two EAAF members, Patricia Bernardi and Dario Olmo, travelled again to Bolivia and on June 21 were authorized by the Governmental Committee to exhume and identify the remains found at Laguna Seca.

The skeleton was analyzed at the Japanese Hospital in Santa Cruz de la Sierra on June 22nd, and revealed the following information: it belonged to a male individual, whose age at the time of death was between 22 and 32 years old, and height was 165cm +/- 3cm. A premortem fracture at the distal extreme of the left humerus (elbow) was also found.

Correlating the information from the study of the bone remains with the physical data provided by the family of Carlos Coello Coello, it was possible to establish a positive identification.

It was not possible, however, to determine cause and manner of death from the bone remains or surrounding evidence. According to historical data, Coello was fatally wounded in the abdomen, affecting his liver and producing a perforation in the intestines. The skeleton did not present any evidence that would confirm or deny the testimonies regarding his cause of death. If the location of the wound was described correctly in the historical sources, it could well be that the gunshot wound did not affect skeletal remains.

The remains of Carlos Coello Coello were transported to Cuba and returned to his family, his wife and a son whom he never knew.

Current Situation:

Excavation work was suspended for the moment, given the impossibility of locating the probable sites of burial with more precision. Currently, two groups, one from Cuba and one from Bolivia are working together to continue the historical investigation of the facts. The task is not yet finished and is of vital importance to complete the historical investigation in order to locate new burial sites and/or mark out the areas already surveyed.
Scientists have launched a search for the remains of the Marxist leader, whose fierce idealism still haunts Latin America nearly 30 years after his execution. His appeal has proved so enduring that he is now a cult figure in the nation he had hoped to rally to revolution.

He was an elusive guerrilla prince with a burning cause and a three-letter nickname that came to stand for the coming insurrection.

So when his limp body — pocked with bullet holes and reeking of formaldehyde — was dumped in a hospital laundry room for the world to witness, the Bolivian army understandably thought it had shut down the legend of Ernesto “Che” Guevara.

On that day, Oct. 10, 1967, hundreds of townsfolk lined up at the Lord of Malta Hospital in Vallegarde for the makeshift wake. Che was dead, says Eric Blumenthal, an agricultural technician who was in the line, but there was something about the look on his face.

“You know the images of Christ that you see everywhere — with the slender face and the pointed nose? He looked like that. "What's more, his eyes were open. So no matter where you were when you looked at him, it always seemed like he was watching you."

The army must have been spooked as well because officers suddenly decided to erase all traces of the Argentine-born Marxist. His body vanished the next day. But instead of disappearing, Che remains, nearly three decades later, a haunting specter in Latin America.

In Vallegarde, at the western edge of the southeastern state of Santa Cruz, old...

Forensic anthropologists dig — fruitlessly so far — for Che's remains.
Digging for the Remains of the Martyred Marxist Leader

Carlos Somigliana digs like a chain-gang convict one minute, then uses tweezers to piece together bits of a shattered cranial bone the next. He is a member of the Argentine Forensic Anthropology Team, a group of world-class grave-diggers, who have unearthed many mass graves from Ethiopia to El Salvador.

Here on the edge of the weekly airstrip, Somigliana wants to compare the color and texture of the soil with samples from nearby pits. Unnatural alterations could be the sign of a clandestine tomb. The shovel brigade digs in with gusto. But after opening a six-foot-long trench, a light must turn into a downpour and the pit turns into a wading pool. Later, huddled under a plastic tarp, Somigliana admits that the search for Che — and for the remains of two dozen fellow fighters — has been bogged down from the beginning.

After admitting the deed in an interview with the New York Times last November, Vargas failed to pinpoint the secret tomb. He claims he just doesn't remember.

Other accounts have Che interred beneath the telephone company or inside a false wall in the old City Hall building.

"Everything has its limits," said Patricia Bernardi, one of the exasperated anthropologists. "We're not going to dig up the telephone company."

They will, however, go the extra dozen miles. The morning after the downpour, Somigliana strolls by the shack of a wrinkled and stooped old man named Gonzalez, who says he knows about a field full of bodies. He is hosed out of bed with the promise of 20 Bolivianos, about five dollars.

The four-wheel-drive Toyota Land Cruiser struggles out of Vallegande on a twisting dirt track that crosses the same stream four times within a quarter-mile. Twenty minutes later, on Gonzalez's orders, the truck stops halfway up a misty slope.

It's a sublime setting for a secret burial, but a teary farmer insists that the only thing in this dirt is his bean crop. "They were never here. Never. We never heard anything about the guerrillas, in all my years," he says.

Somigliana is used to the cold shoulder. Under a municipal decree, land owners must temporarily turn over plots at the search party's request. But the campesinos don't trust the government to give back the land, and they treat anthropologists like trespassers.

I believe armed struggle is the only solution for peoples who are fighting to be free. And I live in accordance with my beliefs...

"Marry will call me an adventurer, and I am."

"Except I'm an adventurer of a different sort, one who risks his skin to test his beliefs.

— Che Guevara in a farewell letter to his parents.

In 1966, the Cuban utopia Che envisioned is a bad dream of dictatorship. Most guerrilla groups in Latin America have petitioned the prolonged people's war for electoral politics. Instead of dropping like Communists as demands, the American embargo has been a political victory."

...for Washington, Che was a Spanish-speaking Ho Chi Minh bent on turning all of Latin America into revolutionary sati.

After the triumph in Cuba, Che spent the rest of his short life living up to his legend. He would log marathon hours in his Central Bank office, then peel off his shirt to join a sugar cane-cutting brigade. More demoralized man than architect, he left Cuba in 1965 for armed missions impossible to the Congo and Bolivia.

"He didn't live for victory, but for the struggle," wrote Uruguayan author Eduardo Galeano. "And he didn't even turn his head to look..."
Scientists Search for Guevara 30 Years After His Death

Martyrdom is part of his market appeal. Unlike Edén Pastora, Álvaro
Guzmán and other guerrilla
champions, Che never got fat, gay and counter-revolutionary.

Hundreds of people had been
killed in the El Salvadoran village of
El Mozote by an elite U.S.-trained
army battalion. The Salvadoran
army had been on the dec. 10, 1981, bloodbath a "cross fire" be-
tween its troops and leftist rebels.

Eleven years later, the civil war was over, and a U.N.-sponsored
Truth Commission was about to
wind up in the final judgment.

The Argentine team began digging in October 1992 at a small convent
adjacent to the village church.

They found 143 skeletons, 131 of
whom belonged to children under
the age of 2. The bullet cartridges
were manufactured in Lake City, Missouri.

Due to their definitive forensic evidence, the Truth Commission's
report called EL Mozote a massacre
and blamed the Salvadoran military.

"They couldn't keep up
with the volume of fire," said
Bernardo, a 43-year-old
member of the team. "The
bodies were spread all over.

There was no discussion about
the cause of death or who was
responsible. There were no
juries or trials. And no one just
that's why this mission is
failing.

At El Mozote, Tutela Legal, the
human rights office of the Roman
Catholic archdiocese, had spent
more than two years putting togeth-
er a dossier on the killings and the
situation.

Vallegrande is scared.

The group was the brainchild
of Clyde Snow, an American
anthropologist, who combines
techniques from archaeol-
y, physical anthropology and
medicine to investigating racial
rights abuses and solve legal cases.

The team was founded in
Buenos Aires in 1984, as Argentina
was emerging from eight years of
dictatorship during which at
least 90,000 people had been "dis-
appeared" by the state.

The team then investigates
by presenting itself. But their
work — sponsored by the Ford
Foundation, the World Council
of Churches and other bodies — is
also intended to clarify the histori-
cal record.

Take, for example, what may
have been the largest massacre in
modern Latin American history.

But the search is on, and
there is hope — that's the way
they are. Bernardo says he
doesn't think that the
museum himself would have wanted
Che to declare: "Where a man falls
where a man should be buried."
La búsqueda de los restos del Che

Vallegrande rescató la memoria de Chapaco

Por Eduardo Tarnassi
(Enviado especial)

Devolución: la osamenta del guerrillero boliviano, compañero de Ernesto Guevara, fue la primera en ser entregada a sus familiares; su hermana se negó a que fuera enterrado en la zona.

VALENGRADE - La escena era casi trágica. Rodolfo Arana Campero, sobrino carnal del guerrillero conocido por el nombre de guerra de Chapaco, ascendía por un de las tontas tortuosas callecitas que le dan contorno a Vallegrande con un ataúd de pequeñas dimensiones sobre su hombro derecho.

Había trabajado toda la noche junto a un carpintero deconociendo elementos elementales para fabricar la rústica caja en la que pondrían a descansar para siempre lo que en vida fue Jaime Arana Campero, quien, a los 29 años y como integrante de las escuadras de fuerzas de Ernesto "Che" Guevara, fue muerto en Los Cajones, el 13 de octubre de 1967, es decir cinco días después que su comandante.

Rodolfo, con el ataúd a cuestas, pasó frente a la iglesia Matriz. Las puertas del templo estaban cerradas y las campanas del reloj daban las 4.

Un desconocido se ofreció amablemente a ayudarlo. Juntos tomaron las manijas de ferretería que se habían adosado a los costados de la caja y lentamente se dirigieron al modesto salón de actos de la Alcaldía.

Minutos antes, Martha Arana Campero, la hermana del guerrillero marxista, había hecho los sencillos arreglos finales con una de las integrantes del equipo de antropólogos forenses argentinos.

Patricia Bernardi escuchó con respeto el pedido: "Quiero que los huesos de mi hermano sean enterrados en esta montaña que le pertenece cuando era niño, sólo eso".

Sueños infantiles

Y así fue. El funeral desarrolló en un profundo silencio, quebrado únicamente por los disparos de las máquinas fotográficas, y observado por un Simón Bolívar inmortalizado en una tela en la que el artista lo imaginó adusto y reencarnado, como preparado para la ocasión que se estaba viviendo.

Una a una la antropóloga depositó las partes del esqueleto en una urna con forma de féretro y los tapó piadosamente con la mantita blanca que seguramente dio calor a sueños infantiles.

Ese era el último acto protagonizado por Jaime Arana Campero, Chapaco, un joven que conoció fortuitamente al Che Guevara en un hospital de la provincia de Córdoba y a partir de ahí decidió seguirlo.

En la macabra ceremonia no había ni dolor ni angustia, sólo recuerdos lejanos de una mujer que, según nos relató hace unos días, vago casi 20 años junto a su madre para dar cristiana sepultura a su hermano en Tarifa.

Sin embargo, aquí, en Vallegrande, no hubo siquiera un responso.

Aparición tardía

Martha Arana Campero leyó un sencillo discurso, en el que no pudo dejar de mencionar que no se encontraba preparada para esta aparición, luego de 28 años de misterio, y señaló que esto era posible "gracias a que el país vive en democracia y realiza sus actos con transparencia".

Ocurrido esto, y una vez más, se le pidió que Chapaco descansara en Vallegrande, como parte de un museo que la ciudad espera tener para recordar aquellos días en que el Che y sus hombres habían hecho la revolución en Bolivia.

Una vez más, la mujer se negó, aunque accedió a donar las sandalias de caminero que su hermano llevaba cuando le llegó la muerte.

Vallegrande está en silencio. Su cielo gris y amenazante hace aún más angustiosas este tipo de vicencias.

La gente sí siquiera observa con curiosidad lo que está ocurriendo a su alrededor.

Primer acto

Entretanto, los huesos de Chapaco quedaron a solas con su hermana y sus sobrinos en la habitación de un hotel esperando regresar a Tarifa.

Cayó así el telón del primer acto de esta historia de violencia, sangre y metralla en la que su principal protagonista, el comandante Che Guevara, como se lo denomina aquí, se niega a aparecer.

Tal vez hoy sea realidad aquellos que alguna vez escribió Dalmiro Sáenz: "Aquí yace Ernesto Guevara, lo enterraron en un cajón de tierra y miedo y lo taparon con la noche sin cielo de la selva".
RASTRILLAJE EN BOLIVIA

Se intensifica con un georradar la búsqueda de la tumba del Che

El sofisticado equipo comienza a operar hoy • Lo hará en un área junto al aeródromo de Vallegrande • Y en otra frente al cementerio • La misión la dirige un equipo argentino-cubano

CLARIN EN BOLIVIA

VALLEGRANDE, Bolivia (Enviado especial). — Los expertos dedicados a la búsqueda de los restos de Ernesto “Che” Guevara comenzarán hoy los rastreos con georradar, en las dos zonas ya demarcadas del aeródromo de Vallegrande, junto a la pista vieja y otra, cerca de la demuida pared de barro del cementerio.

Ayer, el antropólogo argentino Carlos Somigliana, ayudado por dos lugareños, comenzaron a desmalezar, a punta de machete, una zona aun inexplorada que se encuentra en los fondos del Rotary Club y del predio vecino, un terreno donde el Servicio de Caminos local guarda sus antiguas maquinarias.

La expectativa de Somigliana es terminar de desmalezar cuanto antes para comenzar allí también los trabajos con el georradar. Los expertos tienen esperanzas ciertas de encontrar restos de guerrilleros, aunque están lejos de asegurar que ahí se encuentren los del Che, a pesar de que allí se aseguran los vallegrandinos.

Previsiones

A última hora del jueves, tras la llegada a Vallegrande de Layola Gazmán, presidenta de la Asociación de Familiares, el gobierno autorizó la entrega de los huesos del guerrillero Jaime Arana Campero a su hermana.

Hasta ese día, la burocracia boliviana le impedia llevarse los restos de su hermano, conocido como el “Chapaco”, hasta su ciudad, Tarija, en el sur del país, para cumplir con el deseo de su madre muerta que descansara con ella en la bóveda.

A pesar de las plegarias el guerrillero cayó. Ayer por la tarde, en un acto presidido por el subprefecto de Vallegrande, coronel Jorge Cortez, en la Casa de la Cultura, se realizó la entrega formal de los restos de “Chapaco” a su hermana.
Tras los huesos del "Che":

Exhumaron restos del cubano Carlos Coello Coello (Tuma)

-Hoy realizan peritaje forense en la morgue del hospital Japonés-

Antropólogos forenses argentinos exhumaron los restos desenterrados del guerrillero Tuma. En presencia del fiscal Juan Ribera Alvarez, la comisión que viajó a Baye, la guada al hospital japonés, realizó el peritaje como "Tuma" fue guardián de la mies" en "Cubierta". La comisión, que realizó las exhumaciones, llevó a cabo el peritaje forense junto a los antropólogos forenses argentinos. Los antropólogos, bajo la dirección de los expertos forenses, realizaron las exhumaciones en el hospital japonés, donde se encontraron los restos del guerrillero Tuma.

Los restos serán llevados a Cuba

Los restos del guerrillero cubano Carlos Tuma, hallados en la morgue del hospital japonés, serán llevados a Cuba en un avión especial. Una comisión de antropólogos forenses, liderada por el médico legal argentino, realizará el peritaje forense en la morgue del hospital japonés. Los antropólogos forenses, bajo la dirección de los expertos forenses, realizaron las exhumaciones en el hospital japonés, donde se encontraron los restos del guerrillero Tuma.

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