

**Ernesto** &quot;**Che**&quot; **Guevara** (Spanish pronunciation: [ˈtʃe ˈe ˈβetaːɾa]<sup>[4]</sup> June 14, 1928 – October 9, 1967),

<sup>[1]</sup>

also known as

**El Che**

, was an

[Argentine](#)

[Marxist](#)

[revolutionary](#)

,  
[physician](#)

, author,

[guerrilla](#)

leader,

[diplomat](#)

, and

[military theorist](#)

. A major figure of the

[Cuban Revolution](#)

, his stylized visage has become an ubiquitous

[countercultural](#)

symbol of

[rebellion](#)

and global insignia

[in popular culture](#)

.  
<sup>[5]</sup>

As a young [medical student](#), Guevara traveled throughout [South America](#) and was radicalized by the poverty, hunger, and disease he witnessed.

<sup>[6]</sup>

His burgeoning desire to help overturn what he saw as the capitalist exploitation of Latin America by the United States prompted his involvement in

[Guatemala](#)

's social reforms under President

[Jacobo &Aacute;rbenz](#)

, whose eventual

[CIA-assisted overthrow](#)

at the behest of the

[United Fruit Company](#)

solidified Guevara's political ideology.

<sup>[6]</sup>

Later, in [Mexico City](#), he met [Raúl](#) and [Fidel Castro](#), joined their [26th of July Movement](#), and sailed to Cuba aboard the yacht [Granma](#), with the intention of overthrowing U.S.-backed Cuban dictator [Fulgencio Batista](#).

[7]

Guevara soon rose to prominence among the [insurgents](#), was promoted to second-in-command, and played a pivotal role in the victorious two-year guerrilla campaign that deposed the Batista regime.

[8]

Following the [Cuban Revolution](#), Guevara performed a number of key roles in the new government. These included reviewing the appeals and [g squads](#) [firin](#) for those convicted as [war criminals](#) during the [revolutionary tribunals](#).

[9]

instituting [agrarian land reform](#) as minister of industries, helping spearhead a successful nationwide [literacy campaign](#), serving as both national bank president and instructional director for [Cuba's armed forces](#), and traversing the globe as a diplomat on behalf of Cuban socialism. Such positions also allowed him to play a central role in training the militia forces who repelled the [Bay of Pigs Invasion](#).

[10]

and bringing the [Soviet nuclear-armed ballistic missiles](#) to Cuba which precipitated the 1962

### Cuban Missile Crisis

[11]

Additionally, he was a prolific writer and diarist, composing a seminal manual

on

guerrilla warfare

, along with a best-selling

memoir

about

his youthful continental motorcycle journey

. His experiences and studying of

Marxism&ndash;Leninism

led him to posit that the

Third World

's

underdevelopment

and

dependence

was an intrinsic result of

imperialism

,

neocolonialism

, and

monopoly capitalism

, with the only remedy being

proletarian internationalism

and

world revolution

.

[12]

[13]

Guevara left Cuba in 1965 to foment revolution abroad, first

unsuccessfully

in

Congo-Kinshasa

and later

in Bolivia

, where he was captured by

CIA

-assisted Bolivian forces and

summarily executed

.

[14]

Guevara remains both a revered and reviled historical figure, polarized in the collective imagination [in a multitude](#) of biographies, memoirs, essays, documentaries, songs, and films. As a result of his perceived [martyrdom](#), poetic invocations for [class struggle](#), and desire to create the consciousness of a "new man"; driven by moral rather than material incentives, <sup>[15]</sup> he has evolved into a quintessential icon of various [leftist](#)-inspired movements. *Time* magazine named him one of the [100 most influential](#) people of the 20th century, <sup>[16]</sup> while an [Alberto Korda](#) photograph of him, titled *Guerrillero Heroico* (shown), was cited by the [Maryland Institute College of Art](#) as "the most famous photograph in the world"; <sup>[17]</sup>

Ernesto Guevara was born to Ernesto Guevara Lynch and his wife, Celia de la Serna y Llosa, on June 14, 1928 <sup>[1]</sup> in [Rosario](#), [Argentina](#), the eldest of five children in an middle-class [Argentine](#) family of [Spanish](#) (including [Basque](#) and [Cantabrian](#)) descent, as well as [Irish](#) by means of his aristocratic ancestor [Patrick Lynch](#).

<sup>[18]</sup>

<sup>[19]</sup>

<sup>[20]</sup>

In accordance with the flexibility allowed in [Spanish naming customs](#), his legal name (Ernesto Guevara) will sometimes appear with "de la Serna" and/or

&quot;Lynch&quot; accompanying it.

[\[21\]](#)

Referring to Che's &quot;restless&quot; nature, his father declared &quot;the first thing to note is that in my son's veins flowed the blood of the

[Irish rebels](#)

&quot;.

[\[22\]](#)

Very early on in life, Ernestito (as he was then called) developed an &quot;affinity for the poor&quot;. [\[23\]](#) Growing up in a family with [leftist](#) leanings, Guevara was introduced to a wide spectrum of political perspectives even as a boy.

[\[24\]](#)

His father, a staunch supporter of

[Republicans](#)

from the

[Spanish Civil War](#)

, often hosted many veterans from the conflict in the Guevara home.

[\[25\]](#)

Despite suffering crippling bouts of acute [asthma](#) that were to afflict him throughout his life, he excelled as an athlete, enjoying swimming, football, golf, and shooting; while also becoming an &quot;untiring&quot; cyclist. [\[26\]](#) [\[27\]](#) He

was an avid

[rugby union](#)

player,

[\[28\]](#)

and played at

[fly-half](#)

for

[Club Universitario de Buenos Aires](#)

.

[\[29\]](#)

His rugby playing earned him the nickname &quot;Fuser&quot;—a contraction of *El Furibundo*

(raging) and his mother's surname, de la Serna—for his aggressive style of play.

[\[30\]](#)

## Intellectual and literary interests



During his time at the University of Buenos Aires, Guevara developed an interest in the Latin American writers, Horacio Quiroga, and José Martí. He also became involved in the political and social movements of the time, including the Argentine Revolution. In 1951, he embarked on a motorcycle journey through South America, which allowed him to be an

### Motorcycle journey

Main articles: [The Motorcycle Diaries \(book\)](#) and [The Motorcycle Diaries \(film\)](#)

In 1948, Guevara entered the [University of Buenos Aires](#) to study medicine. His "hunger to explore the world" <sup>[37]</sup>

led him to intersperse his collegiate pursuits with two long introspective journeys that would fundamentally change the way he viewed himself and the contemporary economic conditions in Latin America. The first expedition in 1950 was a 4,500-kilometer (2,800 mi) solo trip through the rural provinces of [northern Argentina](#) on a bicycle on which he installed a small engine. <sup>[38]</sup>

This was followed in 1951 by a nine-month, 8,000-kilometer (5,000 mi) continental motorcycle trek through most of South America. For the latter, he took a year off from his studies to embark with his friend [Alberto Granado](#), with the final goal of spending a few weeks volunteering at the San Pablo [leper colony](#) in [Peru](#), on the banks of the [Amazon River](#). <sup>[39]</sup>



correspond to air travel. A map of Guevara's 1952 trip with [Alberto Granado](#) . The red arrows

...with Alberto Granado (left) aboard their minners in [Atenas](#)  
[Guatemala, Arbenz, and United Fruit](#)

Main article: [1954 Guatemalan coup](#)



A map of Che Guevara's travels between 1953 and 1956, including his

journey aboard the [Granma](#) .

On July 7, 1953, Guevara set out again, this time to Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Panama, [Costa Rica](#) ,  
[Nicaragua](#)

,  
[Honduras](#)

and

[El Salvador](#)

. On December 10, 1953, before leaving for Guatemala, Guevara sent an update to his Aunt Beatriz from

[San José, Costa Rica](#)

. In the letter Guevara speaks of traversing through the dominion of the [United Fruit Company](#)

; a journey which convinced him that Company's capitalist system was a terrible one.

<sup>[48]</sup>

This affirmed indignation carried the more aggressive tone he adopted in order to frighten his more Conservative relatives, and ends with Guevara swearing on an image of the then recently deceased

[Joseph Stalin](#)

, not to rest until these &quot;octopuses have been vanquished&quot;.

<sup>[49]</sup>

Later that month, Guevara arrived in Guatemala where President

[Jacobo Árbenz Guzmán](#)

headed a democratically elected government that, through

[land reform](#)

and other initiatives, was attempting to end the

[latifundia](#)

system. To accomplish this, President Árbenz had enacted a major land reform program, where all uncultivated portions of large land holdings were to be expropriated and redistributed to landless peasants. The biggest land owner, and one most affected by the reforms, was the

[United Fruit Company](#)

, from which the Árbenz government had already taken more than 225,000 acres (91,000 ha) of uncultivated land.

<sup>[50]</sup>

Pleased with the road the nation was heading down, Guevara decided to settle down in Guatemala so as to &quot;perfect himself and accomplish whatever may be necessary in order to become a true revolutionary.&quot;

<sup>[51]</sup>

In [Guatemala City](#) , Guevara sought out [Hilda Gadea Acosta](#) , a Peruvian economist who was well-connected politically as a member of the left-leaning

[Alianza Popular Revolucionaria Americana](#)

(APRA, American Popular Revolutionary Alliance). She introduced Guevara to a number of



high-level officials in the

[Arbenz government](#)

. Guevara then established contact with a group of Cuban exiles linked to

[Fidel Castro](#)

through the July 26, 1953,

[attack](#)

on the

[Moncada Barracks](#)

in

[Santiago de Cuba](#)

. During this period, he acquired his famous nickname, due to his frequent use of the Argentine

[diminutive](#)

[interjection](#)

*che*

, a

[vocative](#)

casual speech filler used to call attention or ascertain comprehension, similarly to both

&quot;bro&quot;; or the Canadian phrase &quot;

[eh](#)

&quot;.

[\[52\]](#)

During his time in Guatemala, Guevara was helped by other Central American exiles, one of whom,

[Helena Leiva de Holst](#)

, provided him with food and lodging,

[\[53\]](#)

discussed her travels to study Marxism in Russia and China,

[\[54\]](#)

and to whom, Guevara dedicated a poem, &quot; &quot;Invitación al camino&quot;.

[\[55\]](#)

On May 15, 1954, a shipment of [Škoda](#) infantry and light artillery weapons was dispatched from

[Communist Czechoslovakia](#)

for the Arbenz Government and arrived in

[Puerto Barrios](#)

.

[\[56\]](#)

As a result, the United States government—which since 1953 had been tasked by

[President Eisenhower](#)

to remove Arbenz from power in the multifaceted CIA operation code named

[PBSUCCESS](#)

—responded by saturating Guatemala with anti-Arbenz propaganda through radio and dropped leaflets, and began bombing raids using unmarked airplanes.

[\[57\]](#)

The United States also sponsored a force of several hundred Guatemalan refugees and mercenaries who were headed by

[Castillo Armas](#)

to help remove the Arbenz government. Though the impact of the U.S. actions on subsequent events is debatable, by late June, Arbenz came to the conclusion that resistance against the &quot;giant of the north&quot; was futile and resigned.

[\[57\]](#)

This allowed Armas and his CIA-assisted forces to march into Guatemala City and establish a [military junta](#)

, which would twelve days later on July 8, elect him President.

[\[57\]](#)

Consequently, the Armas regime then consolidated power by rounding up hundreds of suspected communists and executed hundreds of prisoners, while crushing the previously flourishing labor unions and restoring all of United Fruits previous land holdings.

[\[57\]](#)

Guevara himself was eager to fight on behalf of Arbenz and joined an armed [militia](#) organized by the Communist Youth for that purpose, but frustrated with the group's inaction, he soon returned to medical duties. Following the coup, he again volunteered to fight, but soon after, Arbenz took refuge in the Mexican Embassy and told his foreign supporters to leave the country. Guevara's repeated calls to resist were noted by supporters of the coup, and he was marked for murder.

[\[58\]](#)

After Hilda Gadea was arrested, Guevara sought protection inside the

[Argentine consulate](#)

, where he remained until he received a safe-conduct pass some weeks later and made his way to

[Mexico](#)

.

[\[59\]](#)

The overthrow of the Arbenz regime and establishment of the right-wing Armas dictatorship cemented Guevara's view of the United States as an [imperialist](#) power that would oppose and attempt to destroy any government that sought to redress the socioeconomic inequality endemic to Latin America and other developing countries.

[\[51\]](#)

In speaking about the coup, Guevara stated:

The last Latin American revolutionary democracy – that of Jacobo Arbenz – failed as a result

of the cold premeditated aggression carried out by the United States. Its visible head was the Secretary of State [John Foster Dulles](#) , a man who, through a rare coincidence, was also a stockholder and attorney for the [United Fruit Company](#) .  
<sup>[58]</sup>

Guevara's conviction that Marxism achieved through armed struggle and defended by an armed populace was the only way to rectify such conditions was thus strengthened. <sup>[60]</sup> Gadea wrote later, &quot;It was Guatemala which finally convinced him of the necessity for armed struggle and for taking the initiative against imperialism. By the time he left, he was sure of this.&quot;  
<sup>[61]</sup>

### Mexico City and preparation



Guevara with [Hilda Gadea](#) at [Chichín Itzí](#) on their honeymoon trip.

Guevara arrived in Mexico City on 21 September 1954, and worked in the allergy section of the [General Hospital](#) and at the Hospital Infantil de Mexico. <sup>[62]</sup> <sup>[63]</sup> In addition he gave lectures on medicine at the [Faculty of Medicine](#) in the [National Autonomous University of Mexico](#) and worked as a news photographer for [Latina News Agency](#) .

<sup>[64]</sup>

<sup>[65]</sup>

His first wife Hilda notes in her memoir

### *My Life with Che*

, that for a while, Guevara considered going to work as a doctor in Africa and that he continued to be deeply troubled by the poverty around him.

[\[66\]](#)

In one instance, Hilda describes Guevara's obsession with an elderly washerwoman whom he was treating, remarking that he saw her as "representative of the most forgotten and exploited class". Hilda later found a poem that Che had dedicated to the old woman, containing "a promise to fight for a better world, for a better life for all the poor and exploited."

[\[66\]](#)

During this time he renewed his friendship with Níco López and the other Cuban exiles whom he had met in Guatemala. In June 1955, López introduced him to [Raúl Castro](#) who subsequently introduced him to his older brother,

[Fidel Castro](#)

, the revolutionary leader who had formed the

[26th of July Movement](#)

and was now plotting to overthrow the dictatorship of

[Fulgencio Batista](#)

. During a long conversation with Fidel on the night of their first meeting, Guevara concluded that the Cuban's cause was the one for which he had been searching and before daybreak he had signed up as a member of the

[July 26 Movement](#)

[\[67\]](#)

Despite their "contrasting personalities", from this point on Che and Fidel began to foster what dual biographer Simon Reid-Henry deems a "revolutionary friendship that would change the world", as a result of their coinciding commitment to

[anti-imperialism](#)

[\[68\]](#)

By this point in Guevara's life, he deemed that U.S.-controlled [conglomerates](#) installed and supported repressive regimes around the world. In this vein, he considered Batista a "and

[U.S. puppet](#)

whose strings needed cutting".

[\[69\]](#)

Although he planned to be the group's

[combat medic](#)

, Guevara participated in the military training with the members of the Movement. The key portion of training involved learning hit and run tactics of

[guerrilla warfare](#)

. Guevara and the others underwent arduous 15-hour marches over mountains, across rivers, and through the dense undergrowth, learning and perfecting the procedures of ambush and quick retreat. From the start Guevara was

[Alberto Bayo](#)'s

&quot;prize student&quot; among those in training, scoring the highest on all of the tests given. <sup>[70]</sup>

At the end of the course, he was called &quot;the best guerrilla of them all&quot; by their instructor, General Bayo.

<sup>[71]</sup>

Guevara then married Gadea in Mexico in September 1955, before embarking on his plan to assist in the liberation of Cuba. <sup>[72]</sup>

### Cuban Revolution

Main articles: [Cuban Revolution](#) , [Battle of Santa Clara](#) , and [Foco Invasion, warfare, and Santa Clara](#)



Guevara atop a mule in [Las Villas province](#) , Cuba, November 1958

The first step in Castro's revolutionary plan was an assault on Cuba from Mexico via the [Granma](#)

, an old, leaky [cabin cruiser](#)

. They set out for Cuba on November 25, 1956. Attacked by Batista's military soon after landing, many of the 82 men were either killed in the attack or executed upon capture; only 22 found each other afterwards.

<sup>[73]</sup>

During this initial bloody confrontation Guevara laid down his medical supplies and picked up a box of ammunition dropped by a fleeing comrade, proving to be a symbolic moment in Che's life.

<sup>[74]</sup>

Only a small band of revolutionaries survived to re-group as a bedraggled fighting force deep in the [Sierra Maestra](#) mountains, where they received support from the [urban guerrilla](#) network of

[Frank Pa&iacute;s](#)

, the 26th of July Movement, and local campesinos. With the group withdrawn to the Sierra, the world wondered whether Castro was alive or dead until early 1957 when the interview by

[Herbert Matthews](#)

appeared in

*The New York Times*

. The article presented a lasting, almost mythical image for Castro and the guerrillas. Guevara was not present for the interview, but in the coming months he began to realize the importance of the media in their struggle. Meanwhile, as supplies and morale diminished, and with an allergy to mosquito bites which resulted in agonizing walnut-sized

[cysts](#)

on his body,

[\[75\]](#)

Guevara considered these &quot;the most painful days of the war&quot;.

[\[76\]](#)

During Guevara's time living hidden among the poor [subsistence farmers](#) of the Sierra Maestra mountains, he discovered that there were no schools, no electricity, minimal access to healthcare, and more than 40 percent of the adults were

[illiterate](#)

[\[77\]](#)

As the war continued, Guevara became an integral part of the rebel army and &quot;convinced Castro with competence, diplomacy and patience&quot;.

[\[8\]](#)

Guevara set up factories to make grenades, built ovens to bake bread, taught new recruits about tactics, and organized schools to teach illiterate campesinos to read and write.

[\[8\]](#)

Moreover, Guevara established health clinics, workshops to teach military tactics, and a newspaper to disseminate information.

[\[78\]](#)

The man whom

[Time](#)

dubbed three years later &quot;Castro's brain&quot;; at this point was promoted by

[Fidel Castro](#)

to

*Comandante*

(commander) of a second army column.

[\[8\]](#)

As second in command, Guevara was a harsh disciplinarian who sometimes shot defectors. Deserters were punished as traitors, and Guevara was known to send squads to track those seeking to go [AWOL](#).<sup>[79]</sup> As a result, Guevara became feared for his brutality and ruthlessness.<sup>[80]</sup> During the guerrilla campaign, Guevara was also

responsible for the sometimes [summary execution](#) of a number of men accused of being [informers](#)

, [deserters](#)

or

[spies](#)

.<sup>[81]</sup>

In his diaries, Guevara described the first such execution of

[Eutímio Guerra](#)

, a peasant army guide who admitted treason when it was discovered he accepted the promise of ten thousand pesos for repeatedly giving away the rebel's position for attack by the Cuban air force.

<sup>[82]</sup>

Such information also allowed Batista's army to burn the homes of peasants sympathetic to the revolution.

<sup>[82]</sup>

Upon Guerra's request that they "end his life quickly",

<sup>[82]</sup>

Che stepped forward and shot him in the head, writing "The situation was uncomfortable for the people and for Eutimio so I ended the problem giving him a shot with a .32 pistol in the right side of the brain, with exit orifice in the right temporal [lobe]."

<sup>[83]</sup>

His scientific notations and matter-of-fact description, suggested to one biographer a "remarkable detachment to violence" by that point in the war.

<sup>[83]</sup>

Later, Guevara published a literary account of the incident, titled "Death of a Traitor", where he transfigured Eutimio's betrayal and pre-execution request that the revolution "take care of his children", into a "revolutionary

[parable](#)

about redemption through sacrifice".

<sup>[83]</sup>

# Che Guevara - Wikipedia

Written by Wikipedia

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After the triumph of the Cuban Revolution, Guevara was appointed Minister of Economy in 1959. He played a central role in the nationalization of the economy and the implementation of the Cuban Five-Year Plan (1959-1962). He was also instrumental in the establishment of the Cuban People's Republic in 1961.



After the Battle of Santa Clara in January 1959, Guevara was appointed Minister of Economy. He played a central role in the nationalization of the economy and the implementation of the Cuban Five-Year Plan (1959-1962). He was also instrumental in the establishment of the Cuban People's Republic in 1961. **La Cabana, land reform, and literacy**





Che Guevara, Cuba's first leader, with US ambassador [John Lee Anderson](#) in 1961. [PBS](#)

Che Guevara in 1959, the day after the revolution in Cuba. [PBS](#)



Guevara visiting the [Gaza Strip](#) in 1959.



[Che Guevara](#) with [Luis Combarro](#) (second from left) and [Tito](#) (including a visit to [Yugoslavia](#)) in [Tito's](#) [Belgrade](#), [1961](#). [Tito](#) is [seated](#) in the [center](#), [Che](#) is [seated](#) on the [right](#), [Combarro](#) is [seated](#) on the [left](#), and [Tito's](#) [wife](#) is [seated](#) on the [right](#).



[Che Guevara](#) (center) in [1960](#), walking through the streets of [Havana](#) with his wife [Aldina](#) [Guevara](#) (left). [Che](#) is [wearing](#) a [military](#) [jacket](#), and [Aldina](#) is [wearing](#) a [hat](#). [Che](#) is [smiling](#), and [Aldina](#) is [looking](#) towards the camera. [Che](#) is [walking](#) with [his](#) [wife](#), and [they](#) are [walking](#) through the streets of [Havana](#).