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Ernesto Che Guevara

**BOLIVIAN DIARY**

Translated from the Spanish by Michael Taber and Michael Baumann

176pp. Pimlico. Paperback, £8.99.TLS £7.99 [not the Pathfinder edition—see last line]

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*Bolivian Diary*, Che Guevara's journal of his eleven months in the Bolivian jungle, acquired cult and, later, classic status after its publication by the Cuban Government in 1968. But it is worth pausing to ask whether anybody not motivated by historical interest or political nostalgia would want to read it now.

His main political ideas - revolutionary armed struggle, the new man and international solidarity - have little resonance today. Even the Cuban Government, despite frequent invocations of Guevara's name and supposed wishes, has survived since the withdrawal of Soviet aid only by means of discreetly abandoning most of the ideals for which Che was prepared to die. The introduction to this edition suggests that his journal has lasting appeal as a tale of human endurance in the face of overwhelming odds, a view which seems to confirm his posthumous trajectory from heroic revolutionary martyr to all-purpose symbol of youthful revolt against the status quo. Guevara's zealous Communism may seem faintly absurd in the post-Cold-War consumerist world, but his charisma has proved highly marketable - indeed, it has given a whole new meaning to the old Marxist idea of commodity fetishism. The main reason why it is worth seeking to understand the man behind one of the most famous images in the world, however, is that he, perhaps more than any other figure, embodied the attitudes and values of the 1960s, a decade whose ramifications have still not been fully understood.

That said, there is nothing particularly to recommend this edition. The publishers have clearly taken a decision to keep footnotes to a minimum - the few provided function mainly as a glossary - and there is no bibliography or index. The only guides offered to the reader are a short summary of Guevara's life by one of his most recent biographers, the journalist Jon Lee Anderson, and the "Necessary Introduction" written by Fidel Castro for the first edition. I suspect that many readers, especially those under the age of forty, would welcome more help than is given in decoding a framework of reference that is no longer common currency. In that respect the Pathfinder edition of 1994, edited by Mary-Alice Waters, is better value.

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