

## **Document Profile: "Mensaje a la Tricontinental"**

**Title:** Mensaje a la Tricontinental: Crear dos, tres...muchos Viet-Nam es la consigna

**Contributor:** Ernesto "Che" Guevara

**Publisher:** Juventud Socialista Revolucionaria Ecuatoriana (Ecuadorian Revolutionary Socialist Youth)

**Date:** (Unknown) - Date of the Havana Conference of African, Asian, and Latin American Peoples (Tricontinental Conference), Hall of the Ambassadors (Habana Libre Hotel), Havana, Cuba, January 3, 1966

### **Description and Contents Summary:**

Ernesto "Che" Guevara, delivered the speech "Message to the Tricontinental: To Create Two, Three...Many Viet-Nams is the Aim" on January 3, 1967 during the Tricontinental Conference, held January 3-16, 1966. The Conference, hosted in Havana, Cuba, with representatives from 82 countries, formed the precursor for the Organization of Solidarity with the People of Asia, Africa, and Latin America (OSPAAAL), an international group founded to disseminate anti-neoliberal and socialist perspectives to developing states. The piece outlines three central claims concerning independence movements of non-aligned populations of Latin America, Africa, and Asia. The pamphlet first decries economic dependency on the United States and its allies as reinforcing oppressive domestic governments. However, it equally challenges formal alignment with the Soviet Union and People's Republic of China, the "two great powers of the socialist camp", risking devolution into open conflict. The timing of the speech may respond to increasing U.S. troop deployment in the Vietnam War prior to the Tet Offensive, but also to U.S. military interventions in Cuba 1961-1962 in the Bay of Pigs Invasion and the October Crisis, which Guevara directly condemns as examples of the political volatility created by alignment. Secondly, Guevara argues for an informal network of international support among non-aligned populations, albeit directed by Latin American movements united by linguistic and cultural linkage. Finally, he appeals to the self-direction of the individual as a requisite for "the actual liberation of the peoples", which accomplishes the strategic necessity of willing self-sacrifice.

Guevara justifies armed rebellion through an allegory of the gladiator and spectator of the "Roman circus," but conditions this symbolism with an accessible, rational argument posed to his readers. The pamphlet is likely intended for a lower-class or less-educated audience due to its simple, colloquial language. Likewise, the inconsistency of typeface, line-spacing, and spelling suggest that replication of the document and its readership were both highly local in nature. The broad distribution of the speech would be consistent with the document's emphasis on local initiative, exemplified by the document's publication by a variety of independently-directed social movements, such as the Ecuadorian Revolutionary Socialist Youth.

### **Significance:**

While necessarily "socialist" in theme, the piece does not advocate alignment, but locally-directed uprisings which would naturally exhibit features of a socialist revolution. However, its use of historical narrative strictly adheres to a Marxist stagist history that necessarily leads to the overthrow of capitalism, and thereby reduces some of the complexity and nuance of the conflicts it references. Nevertheless, Guevara deviates from terminology and organization of orthodox socialist parties. While Guevara references dependency theory and the emergence of an international proletariat movement, he departs from Marxist-Leninism and Maoism by renouncing extensive planning in favor of spontaneous uprising. Ultimately, the work follows the logic of *foquismo* in its implicit reference to leadership by a dedicated, moral core following (Gronbeck-Tedesco 655). Emphasis on *foquismo*, Gronbeck-Tedesco argues, attracted college-educated liberals within the United States amid concerns of political apathy following the 1968 Democratic Convention (Gronbeck-Tedesco 671). Thus, Guevara accesses even the intellectual culture of the proclaimed "enemy", showing "the armed struggle" to be "as glorious and

appealing to an American...and even a European.” Indeed, supposedly rural actors, in the model of the Cuban Revolution, are not defined as such. Guevara’s ill-defined “proletariat” instead mirrors his own experience, which bridged the worlds of academia, middle-class background, and armed activism. Ultimately, the pamphlet represents a traditional socialist/Marxist argument, but embeds an appeal for cooperative political insurgence unaffiliated with the bipolar dynamics of the Cold War, and in doing so broadens a definition of its relevant actors.

**Page Count:** 20

**Geographical Subject:** Africa; Asia; Latin America

**Subject:** Bay of Pigs (Playa Girón); Cold War; Cuba; internationalism; Korean War; Missile Crisis (Crisis de Octubre); non-alignment; Rhodesian Bush War; socialist literature; Vietnam War

**Language:** Spanish

**Libraries Reporting Copies in WorldCat:** (Differentiated from OSPAAAL, 1967) - Total number: 0; More recent publication (Mexico City: Ocean Sur, 2007. 23 pages): total number: 1; Number in the U. S.: 0.

### **Additional References**

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*Document profile prepared by Ryan Murphy '23 and Julia Smeltzer '23 as part of the course “Arts of Extraction: Latin American Representations of Ecological Injustice” taught by D. Bret Leraul, Visiting Assistant Professor and Writing Fellow (2019-20) with the assistance of Margaret Schaus, Lead Research and Instruction Librarian, and Charlie Espinosa '15, Archivist.*