



needs of humanity and for this to occur the individual as part of this social mass must find the political space to express his/her social and cultural subjectivity. For Cuban's therefore El Che was not merely a man of armed militancy, but a thinker who had accepted thought, which the reality of what then was the golden age of American imperialist hegemony and gave his life to fight against this blunt terrorizing instrument. **R**

Revolutionaries

Greg Albo

It has often been the failure of revolutionary organizations, particularly those trained in certain strands of Marxism, that they expect revolutions to occur only under certain conditions – ‘when history decrees that the fetters of capitalism to have become objectively unsustainable’ or ‘when the politics of permanent revolution make for a necessarily international socialism in a newly constituted world government’. The duty of revolutionaries is to be disciplined, and to plan and organize for when the right conditions emerge. But revolutions – whether in Russia in 1917, Cuba in 1959 or Venezuela in 2005 – never wait upon the forces of production to burst through the fetters of capitalist social relations of production, or for the right alignment of global social forces to make an ideologically correct world revolution apart from national states and

contexts.

In his book *Revolutionaries* (New York: New Press, 2001), Eric Hobsbawm notes that “all revolutionaries must always believe in the necessity of taking the initiative, the refusal to wait upon events to make the revolution for them.” This is what the practical lives of Marx, Lenin, Gramsci, Mao, Fidel tell us. As Hobsbawm elaborates: “That is why the test of greatness in revolutionaries has always been their capacity to discover the new and unexpected characteristics of revolutionary situations and to adapt their tactics to them.... the revolutionary does not create the waves on which he rides, but balances on them.... sooner or later he must stop riding on the wave and must control its direction and movement.” The life of Che Guevara, and the Latin American insurgency that ‘Guevarism’ became associated with during the ‘years of lead’ of the 1960s to 1970s, also tells us that is not enough to want a revolution, and to pursue it unselfishly and passionately.

The course of the 20th century revolutions and revolutionary movements and the consolidation of neoliberalism today has demonstrated all of these things. It is why the daily media ridicules and demonizes socialism and socialists virtually without challenge. The release of the movie *Motorcycle Diaries* on the early life of Che brought a new flurry of such articles. It is why socialists need to chart a different course in discussing and debating the role of historical actors like Che, and the circumstances that made them. Sober assessment of the past is also part of “the refusal to wait upon events” in remaking the terrain of possible futures. **R**

