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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20505
OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR

1. Rostow
2. Bowdler
12a

13 OCT 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Secretary of State
The Secretary of Defense
✓ Mr. Walt W. Rostow
Assistant Secretary of State
for Inter-American Affairs

SUBJECT : Statements by Ernesto "Che" Guevara
Prior to His Execution in Bolivia

25X1

1. Further details have now been obtained [] who was on the scene in the small village of Higuera where Ernesto "Che" Guevara was taken after his capture on 8 October 1967 by the Bolivian Army's Second Ranger Battalion.

25X1

2. [] attempted to interrogate Guevara on 9 October 1967 as soon as he got access to him at around 7 a.m. At that time "Che" Guevara was sitting on the floor in the corner of a small, dark schoolroom in Higuera. He had his hands over his face. His wrists and feet were tied. In front of him on the floor lay the corpses of two Cuban guerrillas. Guevara had a flesh wound in his leg, which was bandaged.

3. Guevara refused to be interrogated but permitted himself to be drawn into a conversation [] during which he made the following comments:

25X1

a. Cuban economic situation: Hunger in Cuba is the result of pressure by United States imperialism. Now Cuba has become self-sufficient in meat production and has almost reached the point where it will begin to export meat. Cuba is the only economically self-sufficient country in the Socialist world.

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b. Camilo Cienfuegos: For many years the story has circulated that Fidel Castro Ruz had Cienfuegos, one of his foremost deputies, killed because his personal popularity presented a danger to Castro. Actually the death of Cienfuegos was an accident. Cienfuegos had been in Oriente Province when he received a call to attend a general staff meeting in Havana. He left by plane and the theory was that the plane became lost in low-ceiling flying conditions, consumed all of its fuel, and crashed in the ocean, and no trace of him was ever found. Castro had loved Cienfuegos more than any of his lieutenants.

c. Fidel Castro Ruz: Castro had not been a Communist prior to the success of the Cuban Revolution. Castro's own statements on the subject are correct.

d. The Congo: American imperialism had not been the reason for his failure there but, rather, the Belgian mercenaries. He denied ever having several thousand troops in the Congo, as sometimes reported, but admitted having had "quite a few".

e. Treatment of Guerrilla Prisoners in Cuba: During the course of the Cuban Revolution and its aftermath, there had been only about 1,500 individuals killed, exclusive of armed encounters such as the Bay of Pigs. The Cuban Government, of course, executed all guerrilla leaders who invaded its territory.... (He stepped then with a quizzical look on his face and smiled as he recognized his own position on Bolivian soil.)

f. Future of the Guerrilla Movement in Bolivia: With his capture, the guerrilla movement had suffered an overwhelming setback in Bolivia, but he predicted a resurgence in the future. He insisted that his ideals would win in the end even though he was disappointed at the lack of response

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from the Bolivian campesinos. The guerrilla movement had failed partially because of Bolivian Government propaganda which claimed that the guerrillas represented a foreign invasion of Bolivian soil. In spite of the lack of popular response from the Bolivian campesinos, he had not planned an exfiltration route from Bolivia in case of failure. He had definitely decided to either fall or win in this effort.

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4. [redacted] when Guevara, Simon Cuba, and Aniceto Reynaga Gordillo were captured on 8 October, the Bolivian Armed Forces Headquarters ordered that they be kept alive for a time. A telegraphic code was arranged between La Paz and Higuera with the numbers 500 representing Guevara, 600 meaning the phrase "keep alive" and 700 representing "execute". During the course of the discussion with Guevara, Simon Cuba and Aniceto Reynaga were detained in the next room of the school house. At one stage, a burst of shots was heard and [redacted] learned later that Simon Cuba had been executed. A little later a single shot was heard and it was learned afterward that Aniceto Reynaga had been killed. When the order came at 1:50 a.m. from La Paz to kill Guevara, the execution was delayed as long as possible. However, when the local commander was advised that a helicopter would arrive to recover the bodies at approximately 1:30 p.m., Guevara was executed with a burst of shots at 1:15 p.m. Guevara's last words were, "Tell my wife to remarry and tell Fidel Castro that the Revolution will again arise in the Americas." To his executioner he said, "Remember, you are killing a man."

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5. At no time during the period he was under observation did Guevara lose his composure.

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Richard Helms
Director

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