

Lieutenant Carlos Coello and Captain José María Martínez Tamayo, who had made the preliminary arrangements several months before to start a guerrilla unit. They were all closely allied with "Che" Guevara and had fought under his command in Cuba. Before long, at least 15 Cuban officers had arrived to form the vanguard of what was to be a large revolutionary army operating in the heart of South America.

According to recounts of the history of this period, Guevara's goal was to use Bolivia only as a platform to move to Peru, where he hoped to join established guerrilla forces in that country. However, the demise of the Peruvian guerrillas in 1965 and 1966, forced a change in plans and Bolivia became the prime target for revolution. Guevara arrived in November of 1966 via Madrid, Sao Paulo and Montevideo, using false papers. Several Peruvian and Bolivian Communist revolutionaries joined Guevara and his Cuban followers. By February of 1967, 15 Cubans and 48 Bolivians formed the backbone of the small guerrilla army.

The Cubans soon found out that the environment in Bolivia was not like what they had found in the Sierra Maestra Mountains in Cuba during the revolution against Batista. The peasants were natives who spoke Guarani, and not Spanish. Natives in other parts of Bolivia spoke Quechua and Aymara. Communication was difficult and the local population was not friendly. In Cuba they had not faced the dangerous animals that were present in the South American jungles (snakes, for example). Although the vegetation was lush, they did not find oranges, mangoes, and other tropical fruits like in Cuba. They could not find animals to hunt for food and there were no friendly

<sup>40</sup> According to the account of Régis Debray in his book La Guerrilla del Che, the following Cubans were part of the guerrilla army in Bolivia:

1. Maj. Vilo Acuña Núñez (Joaquín) killed 31 Aug. 1967
2. Maj. Sánchez Díaz (Marcos)
3. Maj. Gustavo Machín (Alejandro)
4. Capt. José María Martínez Tamayo (Papi, Ricardo)
5. Capt. Daniel Alarcón (Benigno) escaped to Chile
6. Capt. Alberto Fernández (Pacho) killed 8 Oct. 1967
7. Capt. Manuel Hernández
8. Capt. Orlando Pantoja (Antonio)
9. Capt. Eliseo Reyes Rodríguez (Rolando) killed 25 April '67
10. Capt. Suárez Gayol (El Rubio - had been Vice-Minister of Industry in Cuba) killed 10 April 1967
11. Capt. Harry Villegas (Pombo) escaped to Chile
12. Lt. Octavio de la Concepción (El Moro- Cuban military MD)  
Killed in combat 4 August 1967
13. Lt. Carlos Coello (Tuma)
14. Lt. Israel Reyes (Braulio) killed 31 August 1967
15. Lt. René Martínez (sic) Tamayo (Arturo)