Is Nothing Sacred?
Son-o'-God Comics Dead-Kitten Calendar R. Crumb Rip-Off
Plus: Uncalled-For Attacks & Pointless Insults

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Che Guevara's Bolivian Diaries

(EDITOR'S NOTE: Following the worldwide shock and mourning over the reported death of Ernesto "Che" Guevara by a Bolivian Army firing squad, the personal diaries of the revolutionary's tragic and abortive attempt to overthrow the oppressive Barrientos regime quickly became a classic text on guerilla warfare. However, recent chemical analysis of these documents have revealed minute traces of ketchup and A1 sauce ingrained in the paper, two substances Che himself denounced in an article on field kitchen maintenance for the Chinese news magazine Ping An as "reactionary and counterrevolutionary condiments fit only for bourgeois pigs and their revisionist cookouts." Other telltale clues belie the authenticity of the "diaries" as well, specifically the close attention given to spelling and grammar. Simultaneously with the discovery of this cruel hoax, NatLampCo News Service Latin American correspondent Douglas Kenney recently discovered the authentic manuscript outside the La Paz airport, where its pages were being employed as wrappers by an illiterate taco vendor. Craftily obtaining the documents from the simple peasant in return for some beads, hand mirrors, and assorted trinkets, news-hound Kenney returned state-side immediately with the diary, only then realizing that his wallet was missing. NatLampCo is proud to publish these historic footnotes to the brave rebelde's work, and hopes that they may fan the flames of global indignation against tyranny, oppression, and greaser pickpockets.)

Noviembre 7
At long last, our little band has touched Bolivian soil! The flight from Havana was uneventful, although every one of us stretched our revolutionary discipline to the limit fighting down the urge to jump out of our seats, rush to the cockpit and stick a pistola in the pilot's ear. In fact, Marcos, my hot-blooded second-in-command, did, at one point, lose control and leap from his seat shouting, "¡Prende ce avion o Cuba!" Luckily Marcos' seat belt was still fastened and his attention diverted by a double hernia long enough for Tanya, our East German compañera, to whisper that the plane was still in Havana and stuff an air-sickness bag in his mouth.

Marcos and I supervised the unloading of our baggage. We are posing as a Mexican mariachi band, our tools of war cloaked in the guise of musical instruments. Unfortunately, one of the customs officials discovered that our bass-fiddle case contained a Russian-made YD-47 heavy mortar. Thinking quickly, I put my mouth to the barrel and, with no little difficulty, improvised a few bars of "Beso Me Mucho" until his suspicions were allayed. There was, in addition, a tense moment when a porter accidentally pulled the pin on one of our maracas, but, as fate would have it, the device was of Bulgarian manufacture and failed to explode.

After breaking our fast (and one of my fillings) with tacos bought from a little peasant vendor outside the airport, Tanya, Marcos, Pombo, Camba, and I hailed taxis and directed them to our secret hideout in the trackless jungles of Nancahuazu. As we drive, Marcos, a swaggering adventurer who even apes the way I curl my beard, looks over my shoulder as I write in my diary, hoping to steal some good lines for his own. You are an idiot, Marcos, and it is no wonder that your publisher wouldn't give you an advance.

Noviembre 8
We have arrived at Nancahuazu, a forbidding jungle valley in the Cono Sur region. There is much to be done here. I have sent Pombo and Camba out in search of game, and Marcos out in search of them both to make sure they do not break discipline and bring the animal back unfit to eat. Men without women—an old story. I have also sent Tanya back to La Paz in search of my wallet, which I knew I had before we ate those tacos.

Noviembre 9
Tanya has already done much to make the old farmhouse comfortable. She has set up an elaborate wire clothesline in the surrounding palms and amuses herself by sitting under it prattling to her vanity case in that husky baritone I have come to love. When she tires of this game, she will adjust her wig (an early illness has left her with a permanent crew-cut) andumber off to her pet pigeons, first attaching shiny metal capsules to their feet for ballast. This morning, in a burst of feminine exuberance, she climbed hand over hand to the top of our hideout with a bucket of red paint in her teeth and decorated the roof with a gay bull's-eye.

At last there is one in whom I can have confidence.

Noviembre 10
Our first contact with the peasant population. Pombo was roasting a jaguar and Camba was occupied trying to kill it, when the noise attracted a passing worker returning from the distant tin mines. I ordered him to stop and fired over his head, barely creasing the scalp. With that, four others who had been watching shyly behind some acacias ran toward us. "¡Non fuere, non nos mortos, por favor senor!" ["All hail the glorious revolution!"—Ed.] Now that we had won the confidence of these ragged but plucky recruits, I told them that they would be the nucleus of a people's army which would one day overthrow the corrupt Barrientos dictatorship and free its victims from conditions of exploitation indistinguishable from the Middle Ages. Childlike, they stood dumbly at first, too overwhelmed with pride to speak. I triggered a volley high over their knees to loosen their tongues, and, as one man, they raised their hands over their heads in agreement and enthusiastically emptied their pockets.

Now we are ten.

Noviembre 13
Excellent news has come in a coded newscast from Radio Havana. Fidel tells us that Bertrand Russell and Jean-Paul Sartre have espoused our cause and will marshal support for us throughout the European Left. Not only will this shower us with arms continued
and followers, but, if they agree to coauthor the introduction, my diary sales should be boosted by easily fifty thousand copies. Perhaps we can get out another printing of my other book as well (One Hundred and Fifty Questions to a Guerrilla, People’s Press, Havana, Cuba. Seventy pesos, hard-cover, thirty pesos, soft-cover.)

There is bad news as well. The peasants grow restless, making unreasonable and petty demands for food and water. The Jaguar is gone, and has taken most of our ration with him. All that is left are open-face iguana sandwiches and pineaplle soup. Even I found myself forcing down a bottle of Coca-Cola, the vile maté of yanqui imperialists. Although the foul liquid made me gag, I noticed an odd aftertaste that I could not dispel. A half hour later I found myself having another, and yet another. This is foolish counterrevolutionary weakness on my part, and I will steel myself against it.

But I suppose it can’t hurt to kill the six-pack.

Noviembre 28
A visitor, Regis Debray, the famous French war groupie, has come with more happy news. L’Express has finally agreed to my price for the prepublication rights, and there is talk of a series based on our adventures for French television. But this matter must rest until more important tasks are completed—negotiations are stalled with Marboro for my poster, and Gomez, my agent, says Timex still sits on the wristwatch. Andrews, my agent, says Timex stalled with Marboro for my poster, and Gomez, my agent, says Timex still sits on the wristwatch.

Diciembre 1
Diabetes. Again the men complain about the lack of food, and the seasonal rains have begun causing widespread diarrhea, making our movements plain to the enemy. Ha ha, a joke, is it? As Mao has written, “In times of hunger, one jest can be worth a hundred bowls of rice, particularly if you have no bowls of rice anyway.” The men have taken to routinely disobeying orders, and frequently have to be disciplined for pillow-fighting after lights-out. If this seems harsh, it must be remembered that for pillows, true guerrillas use logs.

Marcos’s patrol has returned with word of an enemy encampment not five kilometers from where we stand. Tonight we meet to plan an ambush and vote on whether or not to eat Tanya’s pigeons.

Marcos reports the enemy has Coca-Cola!
Enero 5
More rain today. Once again the men are racked with diarrhea and our patrols are frequently halted, as marching is difficult with everyone’s pants down around his ankles. Our situation is desperate. We have also run out of air freshener.

Enero 6
The diarrhea grows worse. We have run out of corks as well.

Enero 14
The extremity of our need has driven us to reckless adventurism. Last evening, under the cover of a moonless night and some captured Airwicks, we stole into the little town of Pala­mos and attacked the local farmacia. Suddenly, many guns opened up on us and we were caught in an ambush of Bolivian soldiers before we could get to the Kaopectate. How could they have known? Luckily, we escaped with our lives, although several of us have suffered flesh wounds from kamikaze pigeons. The men begin to grumble and, in their rush to blame others for their own tactical mistakes, cast suspicious eyes towards Tanya, who, by the way, says her period will soon be over and we can begin heavy petting.

Nevertheless, the men must be pacified, and our now-routine diet of stuffed mortar rounds has been supplemented with squb.

Enero 17
No Cokes for three days. My hands are shaky and my knees are weak. I am itching like a man on a fuzzy tree. Delirious. I cannot go on unless I have another. Soon. A peasant in the village will deal with me—one rifle, one six-pack.

Soon the sentries will be sleeping.

Enero 18
The camp is in an uproar. Someone slipped past the guards last night and stole six rifles. No one is above suspicion, and as an example to the rest, I shot Pombo through the foot with the remaining rifle.

Marcos has been stirring up trouble again. He is jealous of my deal with Playboy for the “Che” tie clips and billfolds. If we take the capital by spring, I tease him, the norteamericanos will be forced to recognize Cuba and I can plug my book on the Juan­nie Carson show. This is another of those jests I have previously described. But Marcos persists in disobeying my orders, and was absent for bed check. I was forced to discipline Marcos and order him to stand in the corner for three hours. However, there was another helicopter raid last night and there are no corners left in the camp. I made him stand in the latrine instead. Barefoot.

Enero 19
Today we planned the major thrust of our campaign. The time is ripe for decisive action, for the men grow listless waiting around to be picked off by snipers. Marcos, impetuous romantic that he is, foolishly proposed striking at the U.S.-owned oil refineries at Camari, while the rest of our dwindling brotherhood wished to march on the United Fruit Company complex in Fuella, in the hopes of cajoling some bananas from the Frutas. Another jest. One of Mao's favorites.

After several hours of democratic discussion, I rapped my rifle butt (which serves in this rough-and-ready forum as a gavel) on Marcos' head and settled the matter. Tomorrow we set out for La Nosa, the industrial nerve-center of yanqui colonialism in Bolivia. Also, the largest Coca-Cola bottling plant in the southern hemisphere.

Onward!

Enero 20
A black day.

It began well enough. The men who had not been carried off by the jaguar were roused from their trees at dawn, and by noon we were gliding stealthily down Highway 42 to La Nosa, stopping only to eat, sleep or loot in the village. Then, a peasant in the village told me that because we were walking back, Pombo was moving into the clear­­ness, and as an example to the rest, precisely 0800 hours I gave the signal to move out. At 0810 I gave the signal to shoot anyone still cringing behind the trees, and the attack was underway. As Pombo's unit moved into the clearing, a company of Bolivian infantry opened fire, shooting Pombo and his men into poela. Immediately, I sensed that something had gone wrong. As if to confirm my suspicions, Marcos' men advanced to the gate and were cut to ribbons. Marcos himself barely escaped with his life, shielding his body with a Coca-Cola cooler, and scrambled back to our position covered with thick, sticky fluid. Despite my hopes, it was not his blood, but the sight of a five-foot-two-inch, 120-pound Cuban running at breakneck speed with a quarter-ton vending machine under his arm did, at least, distract General Orvando's soldiers long enough to make our escape.

As we struggled back to our base, it became obvious that we were being observed, because whoever led our column was periodically shot between the eyes. This obstacle to our progress led to an animated debate among the survivors as to who next was to become the first, or “point man,” for the remainder of our withdrawal. Marcos, unwilling to obey both my orders that he lead and continue to carry the coke machine on his back, suggested that we confuse them by walking backwards.

And this man, I tell you, was not only free to walk the streets of Havana, but to drive an automobile.

Enero 21
All hope has vanished. They surrounded us as we slept. We are out of ammno, the men are threatening to eat Debray and Pombo is acting suspi­ciously despite his death in my previous entry. I think I, too, am feeling weary of the chase. Poor Tanya. So deranged is she by the rout that she now only croons to her case, even while the artillery rounds, as if by magic, slowly find the range on our positions. They are coming for Che. The noose is tightened, and soon, the fascists think, Che will be captured, shot against a peasant wall and dragged through the muddy streets like a slaughtered goat.

I look at Marcos, sleeping peacefully now that I have clubbed him into insensibility, and I think of how many dreams we shared together during the Cuban revolution, how he looked up to me like an older brother, copying everything about me, and how proud he would be, were he conscious, to know that I have just traded identity papers with him, shaved, and covered my head with one of Tanya's shawls, which she soon will no longer be needing, I can personally assure you. Then, over the river and through the woods, who knows? Maybe my cousin in Buenos Aires who works at the you-know-what factory will hide me.

Che must live, for wherever the people are ground under the heel of yanqui imperialism, my spirit must be with them, whether it be in Rio de Janeiro, Tahiti or Acapulco. Soon, a new dawn, a red dawn, will give light to the world, and perhaps these few small things I have done to hasten that day will be remembered, particularly if Dalton Trumbo (SPACIOUS, Viva Zapata) agrees to rough out the shooting script. Che Lives? ... The Che Guevara Story? ... A Che for All Seasons? ... I Remember Che? ... Viva Che? ... A Che Is Born? ...