

1967

In April, Che's "Message to the Tricontinental" is published, calling for the creation of "two, three, many Vietnams." The same month, part of his guerrilla group becomes separated from the main detachment. On October 8, the remaining 17 guerrillas are ambushed and Che is wounded and captured. The following day he is murdered by Bolivian forces acting under instructions from Washington. His remains are buried in an unmarked grave along with the bodies of several other guerrilla fighters. **October 8** is designated the Day of the Heroic Guerrilla in Cuba.

1997

Che's remains are finally located in Bolivia and returned to Cuba, where they are placed in a memorial at Santa Clara.

## map of the motorcycle diaries





E N T E N D Á M O N O S  
so we understand each other

This is not a story of heroic feats, or merely the narrative of a cynic; at least I do not mean it to be. It is a glimpse of two lives running parallel for a time, with similar hopes and convergent dreams.

In nine months of a man's life he can think a lot of things, from the loftiest meditations on philosophy to the most desperate longing for a bowl of soup — in total accord with the state of his stomach. And if, at the same time, he's somewhat of an adventurer, he might live through episodes of interest to other people and his haphazard record might read something like these notes.

And so, the coin was thrown in the air, turning many times, landing sometimes heads and other times tails. Man, the measure of all things, speaks here through my mouth and narrates in my own language that which my eyes have seen. It is likely that out of 10 possible heads I have seen only one true tail, or vice versa. In fact it's probable, and there are no excuses, for these lips can only describe what these eyes actually see. Is it that our whole vision was never quite complete, that it was too transient or not always well-informed? Were we too uncompromising in our judgments? Okay, but this is how the typewriter interpreted those fleeting impulses raising my fingers to the keys, and those impulses have now died. Moreover, no one can be held responsible for them.

The person who wrote these notes passed away the moment his feet touched Argentine soil again. The person who reorganizes and polishes them, me, is no longer, at least I am not the person I once was. All this wandering around "Our America with a capital A" has changed me more than I thought.

In any photographic manual you'll come across the strikingly clear image of a landscape, apparently taken by night, in the light of a full moon. The secret behind this magical vision of "darkness at noon" is usually revealed in the accompanying text. Readers of this book will not be well versed about the sensitivity of my retina — I can hardly sense it myself. So they will not be able to check what is said against a photographic plate to discover at precisely what time each of my "pictures" was taken. What this means is that if I present you with an image and say, for instance, that it was taken at night, you can either believe me, or not; it matters little to me, since if you don't happen to know the scene I've "photographed" in my notes, it will be hard for you to find an alternative to the truth I'm about to tell. But I'll leave you now, with myself, the man I used to be...



## PRÓDRAMOS forewarnings

It was a morning in October. Taking advantage of the holiday on the 17th I had gone to Córdoba.\* We were at Alberto Granado's

\*At the time a national holiday to commemorate Juan Perón's 1945 release from prison. General Perón was president of Argentina from 1946 to 1955 and from 1973 until his death in 1974.

place under the vine, drinking sweet *mate*\* and commenting on recent events in this "bitch of a life," tinkering with La Poderosa II.\*\* Alberto was lamenting the fact that he had to quit his job at the leper colony in San Francisco del Chañar and about how poor his pay was now at the Español Hospital. I had also quit my job, but unlike Alberto I was very happy to leave. I was feeling uneasy, more than anything because having the spirit of a dreamer I was particularly jaded with medical school, hospitals and exams.

Along the roads of our daydream we reached remote countries, navigated tropical seas and traveled all through Asia. And suddenly, slipping in as if part of our fantasy, the question arose:

"Why don't we go to North America?"

"North America? But how?"

"On La Poderosa, man."

The trip was decided just like that, and it never erred from the basic principle laid down in that moment: improvisation. Alberto's brothers joined us in a round of *mate* as we sealed our pact never to give up until we had realized our dream. So began the monotonous business of chasing visas, certificates and documents, that is to say, of overcoming the many hurdles modern nations erect in the paths of would-be travelers. To save face, just in case, we decided to say we were going to Chile.

My most important mission before leaving was to take exams in as many subjects as possible; Alberto's to prepare the bike for the long journey, and to study and plan our route. The enormity of our endeavor escaped us in those moments; all we could see was the dust on the road ahead and ourselves on the bike, devouring kilometers in our flight northward.

\*The Argentine national drink, a tea-like beverage made from the herb *mate*.

\*\*Granado's Norton 500 motorcycle, literally "The Mighty One."



## EL DESCUBRIMIENTO DEL OCÉANO discovery of the ocean

The full moon is silhouetted against the sea, smothering the waves with silver reflections. Sitting on a dune, we watch the continuous ebb and flow, each with our own thoughts. For me, the sea has always been a confidant, a friend absorbing all it is told and never revealing those secrets; always giving the best advice — its meaningful noises can be interpreted any way you choose. For Alberto, it is a new, strangely perturbing sight, and the intensity with which his eyes follow every wave building, swelling, then dying on the beach, reflects his amazement. Nearing 30, Alberto is seeing the Atlantic for the first time and is overwhelmed by this discovery that signifies an infinite number of paths to all ends of the earth. The fresh wind fills the senses with the power and mood of the sea; everything is transformed by its touch; even Comeback\* gazes, his odd little nose aloft, at the silver ribbons unrolling before him several times a minute.

Comeback is both a symbol and a survivor: a symbol of the union demanding my return; a survivor of his own bad luck — two falls from the bike (in one of which he and his bag flew off the back), his persistent diarrhoea and even getting trampled by a horse.

We're in Villa Gesell, north of Mar del Plata, enjoying my uncle's hospitality in his home and reliving our first 1,200 kilometers — apparently the easiest, though they've already given us a healthy respect for distances. We have no idea whether or not we'll get there, but we do know the going will be hard — at least that's the impression we have at this stage. Alberto laughs at his minutely detailed plans for the trip, according to which we should be nearing

\*The English nickname Ernesto has given to the little dog he's taking to Chichina, his girlfriend who is holidaying in Miramar.

the end when in reality we have only just begun.

We left Gesell stocked up on vegetables and tinned meat "donated" by my uncle. He asked us to send him a telegram from Bariloche — if we get there — so that with the number of the telegram he could buy a corresponding lottery ticket, which seemed a little optimistic to us. On cue, others taunted that the bike would be a good excuse to go jogging, etc., and though we have a firm resolve to prove them wrong, a natural apprehension keeps us from declaring our confidence in the journey's success.

Along the coast road Comeback maintains his aviator's impulses, emerging unscathed from yet another head-on collision. The motorbike is very hard to control, with extra weight on a rack behind the center of gravity tending to lift the front wheel, and the slightest lapse in concentration sends us flying. We stop at a butcher store and buy some meat to grill and milk for the dog, who won't even try it. I begin to worry more about the little animal's health than the money I'd forked out to pay for the milk. The meat turns out to be horse. It's unbearably sweet and we can't eat it. Fed up, I toss a piece away and amazingly, the dog wolfs it down in no time. I throw him another piece and the same thing happens. His regime of milk is lifted. In the middle of the uproar caused by Comeback's admirers I enter, here in Miramar, a...



...PARÉNTESIS AMOROSO  
...lovesick pause

The intention of this diary is not really to recount those days in Miramar where Comeback found a new home, with one resident