

February 1965

Excerpt from Che Guevara's 'Pasajes de la Guerra Revolucionaria (Congo)'

Citation:

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Summary:

Excerpt from Che Guevara's "Pasajes de la guerra revolucionaria (Congo)" on his meeting with African liberation movement leaders in Dar-es-Salaam, Tanzania describing the inability to convince them to fight for a greater cause than the freedom of individual republics.

Original Language:

Spanish

Contents:

Translation - English

I decided to try to get a sense of the "Freedom Fighters" state of mind; I had intended to do it in separate meetings, in friendly conversations, but because of a mistake at the embassy, there was instead a "monster" meeting with at least fifty people representing movements of at least ten countries, each divided into two or three factions. I addressed them, discussing the requests for financial aid or training that almost all of them had made to us; I explained the cost of training a man in Cuba--the amount of money and time that it took--and the uncertainty that the resulting combatants would indeed prove useful to the movement. I explained our experience in the Sierra Maestra, where, for every five recruits we trained, we ended up, on average, with only one good soldier and for every five of these soldiers, only one was really good. I argued as vehemently as I could in front of the exasperated "Freedom Fighters" that the money invested in training would be largely wasted; one cannot make a soldier in an academy and much less a revolutionary soldier. This is done on the battlefield.

I proposed to them, therefore, that the training not take place in faraway Cuba, but in nearby Congo [Che is therefore proposing that the recruits of non-Congolese guerrilla movements fight in the Congo] ... I explained to them why we considered the war for the liberation of the Congo to be of fundamental importance: victory there would have repercussions throughout the continent, as would defeat. Their reaction was more than cold; even though most refrained from making any comment, some bitterly reproached me. They stated that their people, ill-treated and abused by the imperialists, would object if they were to suffer losses to free not their own, but another country. I tried to make them understand that the real issue was not the liberation of any given state, but a common war against the common master, who was one and the same in Mozambique and in Malawi, in Rhodesia and in South Africa, in the Congo and in Angola, but not one of them agreed. Their goodbyes were polite and frosty.