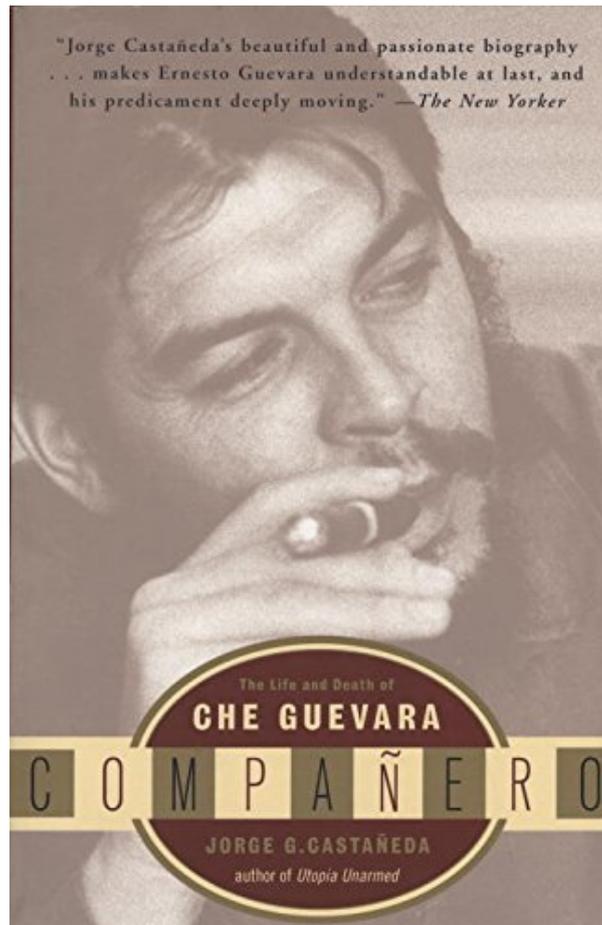
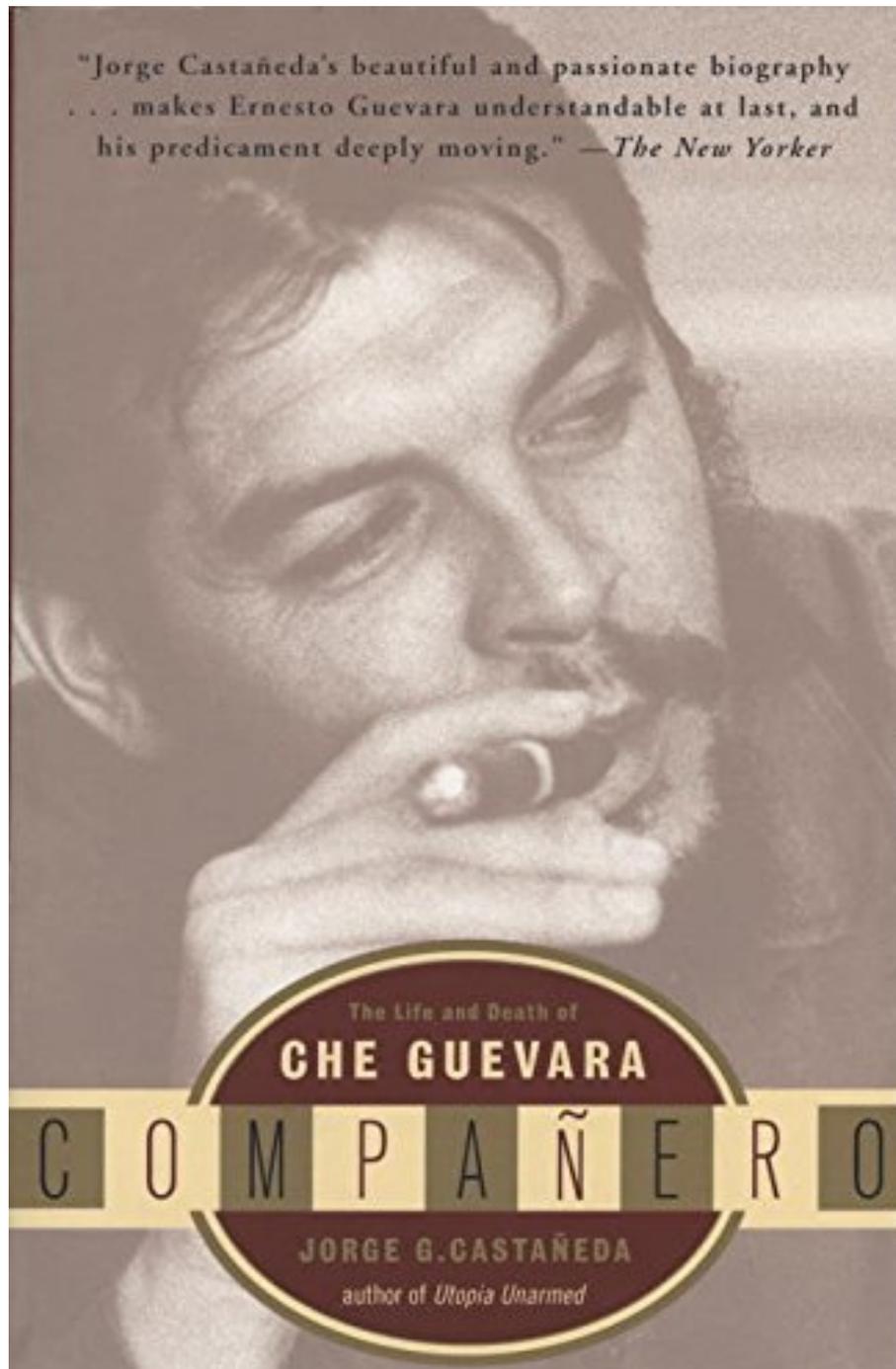


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By the time he was killed in the jungles of Bolivia, where his body was displayed like a deposed Christ, Ernesto "Che" Guevara had become a synonym for revolution everywhere from Cuba to the barricades of Paris. This extraordinary biography peels aside the veil of the Guevara legend to reveal the charismatic, restless man behind it.

Drawing on archival materials from three continents and on interviews with Guevara's family and associates, Castaneda follows Che from his childhood in the Argentine middle class through the years of pilgrimage that turned him into a committed revolutionary. He examines Guevara's complex relationship with Fidel Castro, and analyzes the flaws of character that compelled him to leave Cuba and expend his energies, and ultimately his life, in quixotic adventures in the Congo and Bolivia. A masterpiece of scholarship, *Companero* is the definitive portrait of a figure who continues to fascinate and inspire the world over.

- Sales Rank: #908478 in Books
- Published on: 1998-10-27
- Released on: 1998-10-27
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 8.00" h x 1.30" w x 5.20" l, 1.01 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 496 pages

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An materful work, a brilliant conclusion

By Jerry Caveglia

As a bit of a Cuban Revolution scholar, I found Castaneda's book to add a depth and insight found no where else in the Che literature. The volume of footnotes may frighten some off, but they can mostly be ignored. This book gives a remarkable sense of the incredibly difficult task of actually trying to run a country after a revolution and in the face of such opposition. While much of the book is complex research at its' best, the final chapter is a thing of beauty. Castaneda give meaning to both the life of Che and meaning to the impact of the 1960's on the society at large. The final two pages are brilliant.

33 of 40 people found the following review helpful.

One of the Top 3 Biographies on Guevara

By Reading for a better world

This work by jorge G. Castañeda is one of the very best biographies you can find on Ernesto Guevara by many reasons:

1. The historical chronology is accesible for everybody, but the good interpretation of those events is only at the reach of those who know the intricated aspects of diplomacy and polithics. Castañeda has done a great job understanding the polithical personalities of Guevara, Fidel, Kennedy, Kruschev and all the charachters of this saga. He signals both sides of each personality.

2. This work is obsessively well documented. Castañeda has had access to many fundamental documents for this history. From American agencies, to British and Soviet services. He takes us not only to what history says but to why the builders of history wanted it to be that way. His amount of interviews is outstanding too, the revelations on the interviews match the information on the secret documents.

3. Its difficult to confront a personality like Che Guevara without falling in his charm. Its difficult to be objective on an image that is on the chests of many generations. But Castañeda accomplishes that. He decidedly points the many mistakes that Guevara did directing the Central Bank, or the Industry Ministry. He focuses on the distance that Guevara took between idealism and dogma with economic fundamentals, this was a fatal mistake. Castañeda analyzes thoroughly how many of the guerrilla efforts of Guevara in other countries ended in failures and finally in death (Congo, Argentina, Bolivia, etc). But Castañeda also analyzes the outstanding kind of leadership that made of Guevara an icon. Fighting in the first line of fire, leading himself the voluntary work, accepting his mistakes in public (something unthinkable on Fidel, for example), building his leadership in the equity.

4. Finally, Castañeda builds strong well fundamented theories on several controversial issues like the role of Fidel in the final days of Guevara in Bolivia. The strange lecture of the farewell letter that Guevara wrote to Fidel while Che was still fighting in Congo, a lecture that reduced the polithical possibilites of Guevara in Cuba and pushed him into the craziness: Bolivia. Good or bad will from Fidel? Castañeda discusses this very well.

This is a biography that is fundamented in facts, documents and sharp interpretations. It gets very technical at certain points, like the handling of Cuban economics by Guevara.

In Paco Ignacio Taibo II biography on Che Guevara for example, Taibo focuses in the anecdotic side of the icon, its clearly a bohemian work. Taibo doesnt lie, but there are susbtantial differences in these 2 works (Taibo and Castañeda) that were done at the same time and that even shared some documents. For example, at one very interesting event they deal with the subject in very different ways. In 1961, after Bahia de Cochinos there was a OEA related meeting in Uruguay. Motivated by brazilian diplomats, Guevara meets with Kennedy's rep Richard Goodwin. A secret meeting, non authorized by Fidel or JFK. Castañeda flies to the documents, looks for the interviews, interprets and builds theories. Taibo just turns the page arguing that Goodwin overrated the meeting and that Guevara didnt give much importance to it.

By this way, you can contrast the focuses of both works which can be read as compliments. Taibo's work is very rich in anecdotes from the Sierra Maestra, or the funny things that happened to Guevara while changing the rifle for the desk in the Central Bank. You will love to read this side of Guevara. In the historical side, Taibo is accurate but not deep. His biggest achievement in historical deepness is the development of the Guevara's column since they left Sierra Maestra to the triumph in Santa Clara, this part outpowers Castañeda, but that the only thing.

Castañeda's work left me deeply satisfied, answered many questions and gave me a new panorama on the subject. My 5 stars are fair.

17 of 20 people found the following review helpful.

Excellent Che book

By Black Cat

I read this book immediately following Jon Lee Anderson's "Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life"...I didn't think I would be as impressed, but I was. I recommend both books for anyone who wants to get a real picture of Che...I would suggest starting with Anderson's and following with this one, as I did.

Well written, informative, well researched, unbiased. Highly recommended.

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