CHE GUEVARA, “THE SOCIAL IDEAS OF THE REBEL ARMY,”
JANUARY 27, 1959

“W hat tools do we have to carry out a program such as I have presented? We have the Rebel Army, and this must be our first instrument of struggle, the most positive and most vigorous one. All remnants of the Batista army will be destroyed. Let it be clearly understood that we are not doing so out of vengeance, or solely out of a spirit of justice. Rather, we do so out of necessity, to assure that all these conquests by the people can be achieved in the shortest period of time.

We defeated an army vastly superior in numbers through popular support, through correct tactics, and through revolutionary morale….We have to rapidly restructure the Rebel Army, because along the way we built an armed body of peasants and workers, many of them illiterate, uneducated, and without technical training. We must train this army for the great tasks its members have to face, and train them both technically and culturally.

The Rebel Army is the vanguard of the Cuban people, and in referring to its technical and cultural progress we have to know the meaning of these things in a modern sense….

Taking back the nation involves the destruction of many privileges. We therefore must be prepared to defend the nation from its avowed or disguised enemies….

Now, in the face of the experiences we have had, the question is raised of what our future will be, a future intimately linked to all the underdeveloped countries of Latin America. The revolution is not limited to the Cuban nation, since it has touched the conscience of the Americas and has given a serious wake-up call to the enemies of our peoples.”
Primary Source Discussion Questions

1. Guevara speaks of carrying out “justice” and “necessity” against members of the Batista regime. Was this true justice?

2. What parts of society does Guevara want to compose the Rebel Army? Did those groups support the Communist revolution? What was the army’s task (or objective) just?

3. What is the danger of searching for “enemies of the state or revolution?” Who can be deemed an “enemy.” What possible outcomes could result from a search for “enemies?” Who gets to decide who an “enemy” is?

4. What “enemies” exist in other places outside of Cuba? What plans did Guevara have for those “enemies”?