Diarios de motocicleta

Walter Salles (2004)
**INFORMATION**

The Motorcycle Diaries is a biographical film based on the travel journals of Che Guevara and Alberto Granado, directed by Walter Salles and starring Gael García Bernal and Rodrigo de la Serna. It won the Oscar for Best Original Song in 2005 for Jorge Drexler’s “Across the River,” along with 21 more international awards.

The film recounts the trip made by Che and Granado through South America in 1952. Guevara finds himself transformed by his observations of the lives of impoverished indigenous peasants. Through the characters they encounter along the way, they learn about the injustices faced by the poor and they experience different situations, from the most joyful to the saddest. The experience shows Guevara and Granado a true image of Latin American identity and changes the course of their lives forever.

**PLOT**

In 1952, a semester before Che Guevara finished his medical studies, he and his old friend Alberto Granado, a biochemist, leave Buenos Aires to travel the continent looking for fun and adventure. Although at the end of their trip they try to work in a colony of lepers in Peru, the main purpose is tourism. They want to see as much of Latin America as they can, more than 10,000 kilometers in just a few months. His initial method of transportation was the motorcycle Norton 500 of Alberto baptized La Poderosa.

They head north, with the objective of crossing the Andes, traveling along the coast of Chile, through the Atacama Desert and the Peruvian Amazon and reaching Venezuela just in time for Alberto turn 30 on 2 April. Due to a breakdown of La Poderosa, they are forced to travel at a slower pace, and arrive in Caracas in June.

During their excursion, the two protagonists encounter the precariousness of the people in the Amerindian peoples, and the film assumes a greater seriousness once the men have a better understanding of the disparity between the rich and poor of Anglo America. In Chile, they find a couple of men doing forced labor on the road because of their communist beliefs. The two accompany
them to the copper mine of Chuquicamata, seeing the treatment of the workers Guevara becomes angry.

However, it is the visit to the Inca ruins of Machu Picchu that inspires something in Ernesto. He wonders how the advanced culture gave way to the urban expansion of Lima. His answer is that the Spaniards had guns.

In Peru, Che and Granado work as volunteers for three weeks in a leper colony of San Pablo. There Guevara sees the division of society between the working masses and the governing body both physically and metaphorically (the personnel living on the north side of the river, separated from the lepers living in the south). Guevara also refuses to wear rubber gloves during his visit, choosing instead to shake hands with the frightened, imprisoned lepers.

At the end of the film, after his stay in the leper colony, Guevara confirms his new born egalitarian and anti-authoritarian impulses during a birthday toast, which is in turn his first political speech. It evokes a Latin American identity that transcends the borders of the nation and race. These encounters with social injustice transform the way Guevara sees the world and by implication later motivate his political activities as a revolutionary.

Guevara makes his symbolic “final journey” that night when, despite his asthma, he chooses to swim across the river separating the two societies from the leper colony, to spend a night in a leper hut rather than in the cabins of the doctors. This trip implicitly symbolizes Guevara’s rejection of the wealth in which he was born, and the path he would later take in his life as a guerrilla fighter, fighting for what he believed was the dignity that every human being deserved.

When they were saying goodbye to each other, Alberto reveals that his birthday was not actually April 2, but August 8, and that the reason for that lie was simply motivation: Ernesto replies that he always knew. The film ends with the appearance of the real Alberto Granado, 82, along with images of the actual trip and a mention of the eventual execution of Che Guevara in the Bolivian jungle in 1967.
Main Cast

Gael García Bernal - Che Guevara
Rodrigo de la Serna - Alberto Granado
Mercedes Morán - Celia de la Serna
Jean Pierre Noher - Ernesto Guevara Lynch
Facundo Espinosa - Tomás Granado
Mía Maestro - Chichina
Lucas Oro - Roberto Guevara
Marina Glezer - Celita Guevara
Sofía Bertolotto - Ana María Guevara
Franco Solazzi - Juan Martín Guevara
Ricardo Díaz Mourelle - Uncle Jorge
Diego Giorzi - Rodolfo
Gustavo Bueno - Doctor Hugo Pesce
Alberto Granado - himself (cameo at the end of the film)
Matías Strafe - Chichina’s friend
MAIN THEMES AND QUESTIONS

Friendship

1. Comment on the friendship between the two protagonists. (points to consider: their character, women, money)

Che´s Political Awakening

1. Were there situations in the movie in which Alberto and Ernesto felt out of their comfort zones? What were the negative aspects of breaking out of their comfort zones? The positive aspects?

2. What are some of the events or experiences that have had the most influence on the thoughts of Che Guevara? What has contributed to change Ernesto Guevara, the medical student, to become Che Guevara, the revolutionary?

3. Many biographies of Ernesto’s life state that his experience of the mine at Chuquicamata was extremely influential upon his political thinking, yet we do not see the treatment of the workers portrayed in any great detail in the film. Why do you think this is?

The Rich and Poor Divide

1. The film takes on a symbolic tone when Ernesto talks about the river as more than just a physical division of the two parts of the colony. What other imagery or symbolism can you think of during their time at the colony?

2. What change(s) did Che make in the world? How do you think his trip through South America as a young man affected his views on poverty in the region? Point out specific scenes in the movie to support your answer.

REFERENCES

https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Diarios_de_motocicleta_(pel%C3%ADcula)
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