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VIEWPOINT



## ‘Che’ and Tania’s socks: Bolivian recollections of an ‘incorporated wife’

Caroline O. N. Moser

### ABSTRACT

In 1967 my husband, Brian Moser directed a film about the death of Che Guevara in Bolivia for UK Granada TV’s series *World in Action* (1963–1998), with me working alongside him, as an unpaid, non-unionized, member of the film crew. This Viewpoint article recollects my contribution to documenting this history-changing event, how I came to be there, and how my positionality as a wife meant that I was made invisible, or ‘invisibilised’. The meant that, despite my participation, I never allowed myself to recognise that this exciting experience, or the subsequent prize-winning film, was mine to ‘own’. I use Callan and Ardner’s early 1980s feminist concept of the ‘incorporated wife’ to explore my contradictory positionality, as well as my subsequent long-term admiration for women guerrilla combatants. This started with Brian’s photo of Che Guevara, taken before *rigor mortis* had set in, wearing socks that I thought belonged to Tania, the East German courier, who, caught behind the lines, nursed the asthmatic Guevara, and was soon killed in battle. As I later came to know Colombian women ex-combatants, Tania’s socks became symbolic to me of the role so frequently ascribed to them, if not exactly ‘incorporated wives’, nevertheless still ‘invisibilised’, and dismissed in guerrilla conflicts, amid the celebration of the heroism of men combatants such as Ernesto Guevarra, nicknamed ‘Che’.

### Introduction

Out of the blue, in 2007, Brian Moser, a documentary filmmaker, and my husband from 1967 to 1982, kindly invited me to an event at the Frontline Club in Paddington, London. This was a screening of the prize-winning *World in Action* (WIA) documentary film, *End of a Revolution?* (Granada 11 December 1967). Directed by Brian 50 years earlier in 1967, it dramatically documents the killing of Che Guevara in Bolivia, contextualized within Bolivian and USA CIA geo-politics during that period. The packed audience that attentively viewed the film and then participated in a lively question and answer session, comprised mainly older, white men, comfortably fitting in to Frontline’s website characterization as *a gathering place for journalists, photographers and other likeminded people interested in international affairs and independent journalism*.<sup>1</sup>

This was not my milieu, and I sunk deep into my chair as one well-known journalist after another, in this famous Bolivian event, described their contribution to it. The

congratulatory atmosphere turned nostalgic about the good old days when journalism and television documentary film making was so much easier, safer, and simpler, than in the post 9/11 context. I was not credited in the film, and almost none of the audience knew me, but finally I was driven to raise my hand. As people turned round to look at this unknown white-haired woman, I stated briefly that I was Brian's ex-wife, that I had been part of the crew making the film in 1967 in Bolivia, and it was important not to romanticize what happened. Not only had it been a dangerous film to make, but as a consequence Brian and I were listed on the United States Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) files for several subsequent years. There was a brief pause, and the audience moved on to the next comment. I realized that, after all these years, I was still invisible.

### **Invisibilisation and the contradictions of an incorporated wife?**

So why was this extraordinary event in my life invisibilised? It is not in my curriculum vitae, and I rarely mention it. I realize that because of my positionality as a wife I have never allowed myself to recognise the experience was mine to 'own'. It's an exciting story, and also one that highlights some of the implicit contradictions of being an incorporated wife. I was able to be involved in a dangerous activity precisely because as a wife I was an invisible, a working member of a TV documentary crew but without official recognition. Granada TV, the company for whom Brian worked, did not mind my being there. But I did not have an Association of Cinematographic and Television (ACCT) trade union 'ticket', or a defined salaried job, so officially, I was not there. Precisely because of that, and because I was a woman, I could play a small but significant role in a bigger story. But nevertheless, one I have never felt able to 'own'. Only now, some fifty years later, my introduction to the now dated concept of the 'incorporated wife', has stimulated my interest in returning to this Bolivian experience.

It was feminist anthropologists, Hilary Callan, and Shirley Ardener, who popularized the concept with their edited book, *The Incorporated Wife* in the early 1980s.<sup>2</sup> Callan grounded this in the recognition that:

Women as wives already undergo the 'silencing' or under-recognition of the rest of their personhood which allows them to be so designated ... in most societies married women are in many ways asymmetrically drawn into the 'social person' of their husband ... an analytic acquiescence in this process cannot be avoided, and indeed is a necessary condition for understanding the forces that create and sustain it.<sup>3</sup>

The concept of an incorporated wife introduces the structural dilemma that occurs when, because of marriage, women must be given a location, in or outside the boundary of an organization or institution. Ardener describe this as the *incorporation of wives within the institutional or moral frameworks associated with their husband's occupations*.<sup>4</sup> On reading Callan and Ardener's defining book, it occurred to me that, although not specifically articulated, the focus is twofold; both on the part played by occupational structures in constructing the personal identities of the wives of employees,<sup>5</sup> as well as on the condition of wifehood in settings where the social character ascribed to a woman is an intimate function of her husband's occupational identity and character.<sup>6</sup> Underlying this concept are several basic premises that I find useful to explore, in relation to my own contradictory experience.

First is the fact that despite differences in circumstances and context, there are *elements of common underlying pattern*<sup>7</sup> in incorporated wives with husbands in different types of institutions. This includes wives married to academic members of 'ancient English institutions Oxford and Cambridge'; women married to members of the British civil and armed forces; wives who moved between 'home' in the UK and 'abroad'; and women living overseas in Africa and Asia as wives of traders, settlers, and colonial officials. To this, I would add a time dimension, to consider whether, with the growth of the 'symmetrical' marriage, and with female executive and men 'spouses', the concept is time-bound and consequently no longer relevant in the current world. Or are there still incorporated wives, but as with twenty-first century football wives or celebrity spouses, it is the visibility that has changed?<sup>8</sup>

Second, is the premise that the degree of co-operation given by wives is not always the same. Again, there are two sides to this; first is the institutional view of marriage, and whether it is seen as *antithetical or complementary* to the 'project' of the organization. To address this, Callan introduces a continuum in which organizations can be placed according to the degree to which the marriage of their members is seen as necessary.<sup>9</sup> At one end is the nineteenth century British military, where women were present on the battlefield and on the march, despite of the wishes and the intensions of the authorities; conjugal ties were seen as antithetical to the military life, a necessary evil to be made use of in small ways, but hardly encouraged.<sup>10</sup> Further along the continuum were the colonial wives who were only allowed out after one or two terms<sup>11</sup>; at the other end of the continuum were settler wives who were identified as complementary, and symbols of settler commitment and tenacity.<sup>12</sup>

In contrast, and equally important is the consciousness of women themselves in terms of the character of their association with an incorporating organization. This determines their sense of partnership in, or exclusion from their husband's work. While for some avoidance or resistance is attempted, more often the strategy of acceptance is adopted as the best option. Sometimes the identity generated may be valued, even eagerly sought by the wife. Again, there are different reasons; for some it may fulfil an ambition or gains a wife's satisfaction by assisting her husband's climb up the occupational hierarchy; for others it may be *her participation in the success of a cherished cause*.<sup>13</sup> Yet for others it may offer opportunities for creativity as well as moments of frustration. Some of the skills acquired will be transferable, some will not be—or can no longer be—exercised.<sup>14</sup> The hard choices that some wives must make between their own careers and those of their husbands, and between parents and children are often more poignant when overseas travel is involved.<sup>15</sup> Finally, a third premise relates to the assumed power of institutions to control wives, ranging from judicial control, as with the number of postings colonial wives are allowed,<sup>16</sup> to that relating to the resource value of wives, well exemplified by the labour of settlers' wives.<sup>17</sup> These three premises raise issues I find useful to further elaborate in a specific example in terms of time, place, and institution.

## Recollections from Bolivia

The experience I am recollecting occurred in 1967, the year in which the Argentinian-born, Cuban revolutionary guerrilla, Che Guevara was captured in battle, interrogated,

and then killed in the Bolivian jungle. It was also the year in which I married Brian Moser, two weeks after completing my undergraduate finals at the University of Durham. While middle-class women marrying immediately on graduation was a 'normal' occurrence in the 1960s, in my case it was slightly more complicated as I was two years' older than my university contemporaries. Arriving in London in 1961 with a South African Matric, it took two years to get the requisite A levels for a UK university. I met Brian before I went to university. Ten years' older than me, he already had a degree, and a previous career, and in 1964 was starting a new job at Granada TV. So, we agreed I would complete a degree before marrying, but we were both keen to move forward with our lives together.

Like many of our contemporaries we followed the well-trodden pattern of a white wedding with a large reception, and in our case a Samos honeymoon. Driving to the church in all my finery—a wonderful white dress and veil—my father, nervous about the upcoming event, asking me if I was going to be alright marrying Brian, and I confidently reassured him I would. But, fresh out of a northern university, not for a moment did I think that less than three months later I would be in the depths of South America and a bystander at one of the most important events of the twentieth century.

I was not prepared for this. Brought up in South Africa, I had never been to South America and spoke no Spanish. But perhaps I should have been. Brian was an impulsive, fearless, investigative TV journalist working on *World in Action*, a cutting-edge weekly TV documentary series that led the field in TV news reportage in the 1960s. We had hardly settled into married life in a small cottage in Charlesworth, on the edge of the Peak District, with Brian commuting daily to Granada TV in Manchester and I applying for a post-graduate degree in social anthropology at the University of Manchester, when Brian started to talk about someone called Che Guevara, reported as running a guerrilla group in the Bolivian mountains. Who was Che Guevara, and where was Bolivia?

Murray Sayle, an Australian journalist, accompanying the Bolivian army as it tracked down Che Guevara had come across, what he described as a strongly fortified base of Castro-type Communist guerrillas. He first broke the news that Che Guevara was in Bolivia in April 1967. *The Times* newspaper had published his short article, in which he described how he picked his way through an abandoned guerrilla camp in the Andes foothills and came across a photograph of Che Guevara, together with a medical prescription for the revolutionary's asthma; evidence that allowed him to break the news that Che had left Cuba to foment revolution in South America. Following Sayle's lead that 'we can get to Guevara', by mid-August, Brian persuaded Granada Television it would make a good WIA film and left for South America. This was his job and so it was not surprising. Granada agreed to finance Richard Gott, the Guardian's Latin America correspondent, a well-known left-wing figure, to accompany Brian on an exploratory trip. Two or three weeks later I received a curious telegram from Brian in La Paz, the capital of Bolivia, saying, *Come to Bolivia now, or I'll see you on the 10th of November*. There was no internet, or even telexes, phones were inordinately expensive, so this was my first communication since he had left the UK.

How did Brian arrange for me to join him in Bolivia? As a twentieth century institution, television companies did not normally send spouses abroad. For those working in media news, the normal procedure was for the director and film crew to go abroad, shoot the film, come back to headquarters to edit, and prepare for transmission,

before rushing off to make the next film. Unlike academic or diplomatic wives, to my knowledge, there was never the concept of a 'telly wife', *preemptively ascribing to the wife something of the character of the institution*.<sup>18</sup> Indeed wives, if not marriage, could be seen as antithetical to the project. Men dominated the 1960s media world, with women's work almost entirely undertaken as production assistants or secretaries.<sup>19</sup> Sexual promiscuity within the workplace was not uncommon, and wives tended to be 'structurally invisible',<sup>20</sup> located in a separate spatial and social world—only joining their spouse's world at the festive Annual Christmas Party.

Thus, in the 1960s, going abroad to join a husband while he was shooting a film was totally atypical if not unique. Brian managed to convince his direct boss, the indomitable Series Editor, David Plowright, later described as *non-conformist, alternative, non-London*,<sup>21</sup> the logic of my going. As was the case with diplomat and missionary wives, though never articulated in those terms, Granada TV would only pay my airfare and living expenses. Fresh from graduating I would be invaluable as a research assistant, and doubtless Brian threw in as his trump card, the fact that we were newly married. Again, context mattered. Granada TV was a northern company based out of Manchester. Southerners, such as Brian, had to relocate to Manchester in 1965, when TV Charters for regional Independent Television (ITV) companies, including Granada TV, were renewed. 'Granada wives', such as they were, as a generalization tended to be Northerners, home-bound wives, and mothers, or working locally as hairdressers, teachers, or social workers. As a couple, Brian and I were 'Southern' and I had a university degree. Add to this Brian's passion, drive and conviction, and Plowright probably thought he had little to lose. But no further details had been worked out. It was probably assumed that, like a nineteenth century military wife, I would be a camp follower.

Obviously, I was apprehensive about the unknown. However, there was no question of my waiting until November to see Brian, based on one spurious telegram. So, in about two weeks flat I rented out the cottage, packed away our possessions in the tiny attic, bought a Jaeger cashmere suit with matching Russell and Bromley boots, filled two suitcases with summer and winter clothes, formal and informal, and flew off on my second-ever air flight. In the 1960s aeroplanes from the UK did not fly directly to Latin America; I went from London to New York, then NY to Lima, Peru, and finally Lima to La Paz. There was certainly no question of the WIA logistics' man assisting me, beyond issuing a one-way ticket. Unable to communicate with anyone in Spanish, or to organize an overnight hotel in Lima, I spent the night in Lima airport along with the cleaners, terrified I would miss the connection. It just seemed normal to me.

Meeting up with Brian in El Alto airport was surreal. It was at 11,000 feet, on top of the world, with Brian full of excitement about the experience I had missed. The tragic but exciting big event that changed history—the death of Che Guevara and the arrival of his corpse strapped to a helicopter rail, in Vallegrande. A couple of weeks earlier, Brian was in Santa Cruz, then the headquarters of the US Special Forces training the Bolivian army forces, the Rangers, to go into the jungle and attack the guerrillas. Together with him were Richard Gott, and Christopher Roper, the UK Reuters correspondent in Lima. As Brian later passionately recounted to me:

It was the weekend, the trial of Debray had closed in Camiri, so we decided to go to Santa Cruz for a break. On Sunday 31st August at dusk, between five and six o'clock, I was walking

across the main plaza square in Santa Cruz, together with Richard Gott, when a US military guy, sitting at a café table, beckoned me over. “Hey, limey”, he said, “your guys were good to me in the war, so I’ve got news for you. This afternoon at 3 o’clock there was a skirmish in Valle de Yeso close to the hamlet of Higuera, and it’s still going on. We got Guevara. You’d better get your act together and get yourselves to Vallegrande”. We went down to the military HQ where Richard chatted to the soldiers while I looked at the messages coming in on the teletype; they made it clear Che had been captured. We collected Christopher from a nightclub, hired a 4 × 4 jeep and drove through the night to Vallegrande.<sup>22</sup>

I wasn’t there for the event of the century that made the careers of all three men in different ways. Together with Brazilian TV Globo whom they’d tipped off, they were the only foreigners present when Guevara’s body arrived, strapped to the rails of a helicopter, and then dragged into the local washhouse, and lain out on a concrete slab, where doctors dripped formalin into a neck artery to preserve his body. They were accompanied by a CIA agent who sat up his body by his long hair, for the milling crowd of local villagers to see. Brian documented the entire event with his still camera, speaking into a small tape recorder—a dramatic voice that together with his still photos provides the introduction to his WIA film. Richard identified to the world that the body was indeed that of Che Guevara, who he had previously met in Havana. Richard would later be personally thanked by Fidel Castro. Christopher, in turn, used his by-line on the Reuter wires to tell the world that Che Guevara was dead. According to the US military account, Che was killed in battle, a narrative quickly adopted by most international journalists who subsequently rushed to Bolivia to cover the story.

Except he wasn’t killed in battle, and Brian knew this, because the US military contact in Santa Cruz had told him that Che had been captured, not killed. When the truth finally emerged much later, it was that Che was first interrogated and then shot dead. Weeks after Che’s demise, Juan de Onis, the *New York Times* correspondent publicly accused Brian of being a liar, when he disagreed with the accepted story—a claim de Onis later repeated on US Public Broadcasting Service (PBS). This was dangerous knowledge; it would make us both targets of the CIA, not only in Bolivia but also through the Latin American countries to which we travelled in subsequent years.

By the time I arrived in El Alto a lot of the action was over, many of the world’s journalists had departed, including Richard to the UK, and Christopher to Lima. But Brian still had a WIA film to make, and in the following weeks as we travelled across Bolivia, first setting up the film, and then filming it when the TV crew finally arrived, I lived on the experience peripatetically through Brian, as the story was recounted night after night to the journalists with whom we hung out. This is when I first heard about Tania, the East German woman guerrilla who it was said had cared for Che as he became seriously ill, his body and legs inflamed by asthma, so he could not wear shoes and resorted to using Tania’s socks.

When Brian photographed Che, he was still in battle dress and had not been cleaned up for the world’s press, who arrived the following day. And he still had socks on his lower legs and feet. But were they Tania’s socks? This stuck in my memory, but asking him recently, Brian now tells me I was wrong. He confirmed that Che’s outer socks were bottle green and woollen, with grey socks underneath, and they were so large they could not be Tania’s socks—and Brian should know as he took the photo. Neither have any of the biographers of Che Guevara asserted that these were Tania’s

socks. But were they correct? As Brian still maintained, *If they were Tania's then surely, they'd have been smaller?*<sup>23</sup>

For me the symbolism of them being Tania's socks was born out by the media curiosity about Tania. Who was she? Why was she there? Was she Che's lover? Local people in Vallegrande insisted on burying her with dignity in a modest, marked grave, unlike the other dead guerrillas including Che, who were buried in unmarked graves. Along with others, her body was later removed to Cuba. She was reburied in a much-visited Mausoleum. At the time I devoured all I could in the local Bolivian press, and from then on, the seeds of my interest in Latin American women combatants were sown.

In Bolivia I automatically became a team member along with a two-person freelance crew assembled for this project. These comprised Al Wertheimer a rotund New York-based cameraman, arriving in El Alto with an oxygen cylinder to cope with his anxiety about the altitude and Ole Brask, a fastidious Danish soundman. I spontaneously acted as unpaid gopher; backstopping Brian, running around, organizing, and often acting as an intermediary between impetuous Brian, acting on intuition, and his work-wear crew, who expected comfortable hotels and Western food.<sup>24</sup> Was it seen as 'natural', to work alongside Brian without pay or recognition? Granada TV, Brian, and I all took for granted the unpaid nature of the labour. Indeed, I saw it as a partnership, a joint enterprise in the film's 'project',<sup>25</sup> in which we were both participating in a radical cause, exposing on TV the truth about Che's death, while additionally I was also loyally defending Brian when taciturn film crews criticized him.

As we started to film, things heated up because the Bolivia story had not totally ended. There was still Regis Debray's trial. Debray was a French Marxist intellectual who had joined Che and the guerrillas in the jungle, and then according to one account, infamously had been asked to leave, as he could not cope with the reality of guerrilla warfare. This differed from the theory laid out in his seminal book, *Revolution in the Revolution*<sup>26</sup> that had made him famous. As Che wrote in his diary:

Danton (Debray) and Carlos (Bustos) fell victim to their own haste, their near desperation to leave ... and on my own lack of energy to stop them, so the communication with Cuba (Danton) has been cut and the plan of action in Argentina (Carlos) is lost.<sup>27</sup>

Debray was captured by the Bolivian army, as he emerged from the jungle in April 1967, together with Ciro Roberto Bustos an Argentinian friend of Che's and an artist—whose sketches of the guerrillas were said to be invaluable to the military in identifying Bolivian guerrilla member.<sup>28</sup> Debray and Bustos were both imprisoned in Camiri, a small oil town on the edge of the jungle, and as we progressed with our film so too did their 'show' trial.<sup>29</sup> This was a long, drawn-out procedure continuing through to November 1967; it conveniently meant that it could form an integral part of the WIA film.

By the time we finished filming the elated US Green Beret cadres in Santa Cruz, responsible for training the young Bolivian Ranger soldiers, who had captured Che, it was clear that Debray's trial was nearing its conclusion. Brian rapidly hired a small aeroplane to fly us into Camiri. On the tarmac we weighed in, and with all the film equipment were overweight, the pilot refusing to fly. Immediately it was decided that I was dispensable and could stay behind. For the first time I put my foot down. This was not easy, but I assertively stated, *This is part of history, and I am going to be there*. I jettisoned my suitcase and left with only the clothes I was wearing, a blue Italian top, a home-made black



skirt, and sandals. While Brian too left some of his gear, soundman Ole refused, taking his collection of beautifully pressed blue shirts. We finally set off, just managing to lift off the runway.

### Camiri and Regis Debray's trial

The Camiri experience was amazing. First Brian, astute journalist that he was, contacted the local Bolivian military commander Colonel Reque Teran. Brian had met Teran's daughter in a La Paz nightclub, La Pena de Naira.<sup>30</sup> Using her name, Brian persuaded Reque Teran to let the film crew go inside Debray's cell, so the world could see that Debray's conditions were not as bad as reported.

Since we were reputedly the first people to get inside Debray's cell in over three months, Brian had been asked to pass an important note to him. Inside Debray's cell I was the *jefe de luces* (the lighting technician) with two heavy battery belts around my waist, holding hand-held lights in each hand. Indeed, I appear for a brief second or two in the film. Brian instructed me to shine the lights on the two Bolivian army privates, accompanying us, to blind them, while Brian dropped the note, so Debray could pick it up. One private was busy instructing us *You can only take photos and you must obey orders. If you don't obey orders, you'll be reported and punished. Please it's only for photos,*<sup>31</sup> as Brian successfully dropped the note, without discovery. Afterwards, sitting in a café, I did not feel elated, as both Al and Ole were angry, threatening to leave the shoot. They had not been briefed prior to going into the cell, and maintained that, had it been discovered, this could have endangered their careers and lives. Again, my role was to calm them down.

Only later did I understand the real significance of the action in which we had been involved. Brian had been given the note by Ralph Schoenman, then general secretary of the Bertrand Russell Peace Foundation. He had been briefly in Bolivia, but was deported by Bolivian authorities when he tried to go to Camiri to attend Debray's trial. Schoenman was reputedly acting as a courier from Cuba, and the note was reputedly from Fidel Castro, intended to be passed to Debray; and this was successfully accomplished. While filming the following day, Debray, as he entered the trial room in Camiri, looked at Brian and said *Gracias*; so, we knew he had got it.

The trial in Camiri took place in the local one-room schoolhouse. It was a hot, sultry space with long side-windows, and high loud overhead fans, creating a slight breeze, but making it difficult to hear the Bolivian lawyers talking. By the time we arrived, the trial had been going on so long, most of the world press had left. Consequently, our Granada crew was one of the few still filming. Al's camera was set up on a tripod in the upstairs gallery, located at the back. During our second day at the trial, the courtroom suddenly became very tense when Debray finally stood up to make his defence speech. Immediately planted hecklers disrupted the process; looking down from the gallery we could clearly see them. After two or three had been thrown out, the judge used this as an excuse to clear the courtroom, and we were all summarily sent out of the building. But Brian told Al to leave his camera running, ensuring that some of Debray's speech was captured on film, while a camera generously loaned to us by a Swedish /Argentinian cameraman Leonardo Henrichsen, meant that Al captured Debray and Bustos on film, being frogmarched out of the courtroom with Bolivian soldiers bearing bayonets.<sup>32</sup>

Back in Camiri, with our film 'in the can', Brian was concerned to get it out of the town before the authorities arbitrarily, or judicially, removed it. Through astute negotiation as well as good luck, not only did it contain a unique face-to-face interview with Debray, but also possibly the only footage of his attempt to defend himself before the Bolivian legal system prior to his sentencing, which eventually took place on 17th November 1967.

### **An invisible courier**

We agreed that I would act as courier, and take the film out, far less conspicuous travelling alone as a *gringo*<sup>33</sup> woman with a small piece of luggage, than a film crew with all their equipment. So, with virtually no Spanish I intrepidly flew in a small commercial plane from Camiri to Santa Cruz, returned to the hotel we had previously been in, and was reunited with my luggage. The rains came down and a one day-wait turned into four days, during which I tentatively discussed the possibility of a Bolivian air-force plane being hired to get the crew out—such was the tight filming deadline.

Finally, Brian and the crew arrived by jeep through the mud to Santa Cruz, and we continued to complete the film with important interviews back in La Paz. This included the American Ambassador, Mr Douglas Henderson, filmed playing croquet in the Embassy Garden. When Brian deviated from the agreed questions to ask Mr. Henderson about the presence of two named US CIA agents, one in Higuera where Che was shot, the other in Vallegrande when Che's body was delivered, the Ambassador's aides stopped the interview and presumptuously chucked us out of the Embassy. With the US CIA's role in the capture and death of Che still hotly denied, Brian's questions were an unwelcome intervention. What followed was a series of telephone calls to our hotel room during the night, a memorable one at 3.15 am Phoning us was the head of the US Information Services (USIS), Vitas Don Bravo (newly arrived from Vietnam), requiring Brian to return the shot film or threatening us that *The US State Department has CIA files on you: we will see to it that you cannot work anywhere in Latin America.*<sup>34</sup>

Brian did not return the shot film. Instead he requested the British Ambassador in La Paz to hold it until the documentary filming was completed. With the film in his hands, Brian then flew back to Manchester, where along with his editor Dai Vaughan, he made the award-winning WIA film, *End of a Revolution?*, identified as one of ten top WIA programmes made over several decades. The US government collaborated closely with the British Embassies across Latin America, and in the coming months as Brian and I travelled to Lima Peru, and then in 1968 to Guatemala, the local British Embassies informed us that our movements were being tracked. I have never checked out the contents of our CIA files, despite the introduction in the US of the Freedom of Information Act.

### **The incorporated wife post filming**

Invisible and of no interest to any authorities, Brian and I agreed, that strategically I would remain in Bolivia, as a 'pawn', while Brian edited the film in the UK. After its successful transmission, Granada had to decide on the next WIA film Brian should make. At this point Brian used the fact that I was still in Bolivia, to persuade Granada to let him continue making films in Latin America, by no means a forgone conclusion. When I recently asked Brian why Granada continued to allow this informal arrangement, his

response was that the Bolivian film had been considered a great success, so Plowright was prepared to continue to see what else we could come up with. Indeed, the arrangement continued through July 1968, with two further WIAs made, one in Guatemala and British Honduras, the other in Cuba.

While Brian was back in the UK, I went to Betanzos, south of Potosi and stayed with a young American anthropologist, Cathy Barnes, a member of a University of Wisconsin team studying the Bolivian agrarian reform. She was living in a mud hut on the *altiplano*<sup>35</sup> doing fieldwork in a community living in abject rural poverty. There I began to better understand Bolivian history of the Chaco wars and of the complexity of agrarian reform. We were close to the valleys where the un-captured Bolivian guerrillas reputedly had disappeared after Guevara was killed, making their way southwards eventually escaping into Chile.

After a year making WIA's in Latin America, I returned to England. Meeting up with my university women friends, I realised how I had changed. While they sensibly had been doing post-BA teachers' training courses in Durham, I had been politically radicalized by a seismic global event, even if I had been on the side-lines. And I had fallen in love with the romanticism of guerrilla revolution and the complexities of the roles of women in it. Although through my Cape Town childhood I had indirectly experienced the terrible inequities of apartheid and considered myself politically aware, my Bolivian 'adventure' was a far more direct exposure to power, in this case US imperialism, and to the oppression of local people, the miners and rural peasants in the then poorest Latin American country.

### Tania and women combatants

I never lost my somewhat tangential admiration for women guerrillas. In the coming years I kept reading about Tania, as more information on this illusive woman guerrilla emerged, written by both left- and right-wing journalists. After the original sensational claim at the time of her death that Tania was Che's lover, first in the national Bolivian, and then in the international press, two diametrically opposite positions emerged. The first, that she was a triple spy who loved and yet betrayed Che, was first published in 1968 in Germany. The CIA claim to have invented this narrative, but it culminated in a sensational story by Daniel James in the UK *Observer* newspaper in January 1969. According to Richard Gott *The story that Tania was Guevara's mistress seems to have been invented by James.*<sup>36</sup>

The second story, that she was a *trained revolutionary, working with clear ideals and a precise political context* was first written as a rejoinder by two Cuban journalists, Rojas and Calderon.<sup>37</sup> A more recent 2005 defence of her life comes from Ulises Estrada an Afro-Cuban agent who was close to Tania and *planned to make a life together after her return to Cuba.*<sup>38</sup> In a measured assessment of her life, John Lee Anderson describes how she started as an informant for East German secret services, was then seconded to the Cubans, as a German agent, for their use, and transferred to work for Che's intelligence service Che assigned her to go to Bolivia as a 'deep cover agent', establishing her legal profile and marrying a Bolivian husband. She had joined Che and his guerrilla group, her cover was blown when her jeep and ID papers were discovered in Camiri, and she was subsequently killed in one of the frequent attacks from the Bolivian army.<sup>39</sup>

In 1970, I did PhD fieldwork studying market sellers in the poorest market in Bogota, Colombia. Thus began a commitment to another complicated Latin American country, which further fostered my interest in women guerrillas, or combatants, as they were more commonly now termed. Years later, in the late 1990s, I was in a work position that allowed me to persuade the Swedish International Development Agency (Sida) to provide very modest, so-called 'seed-corn' funds to support Colombian women's networks that were working collaboratively to further the peace process. One grant funded the first network of Colombian women ex-combatants from guerrilla groups such as the M-19, FARC and ELN. This small \$10,000 grant helping them to start the slow, complicated process of forming a network was the first they had received, such was the combination of invisibilisation and stigma associated with women ex-combatants.<sup>40</sup>

Then in the early 2000s, again with Swedish Sida support, I was a member of a three-woman team that developed the use of participatory methodology to strengthen the capacity of the Initiative of Colombian Women for Peace (IMP), a network of 24 trade union-linked NGOs to build a consensus for peace.<sup>41</sup> The fact that a representative of the IMP was one of the signatories to the 2016 Havana Peace Agreement was evidence of the IMP's resilience, assisted by its non-hierarchical 'participatory' methodology. During this period, I spent time working closely with women ex-combatants from the M-19; one woman, in particular, helped me to better understand the romantic call, as well as the political conviction, that draws women into guerrilla movements.<sup>42</sup> The irony is that, as was the case of Tania, they too are largely invisibilised, often still seen as so-called 'love-interests', or sexually servicing male guerrillas, backstopping operations, and if involved in combat, rarely in frontline command positions. Is this then the connection between Tania's socks and me? Was Tania's positionality represented as an incorporated wife, though she wasn't such a wife? In contrast I was an incorporated wife, which not only gave me the opportunity to experience an extraordinary event, but also over time to develop my own career outside of TV.

But this was a gradual process. In 1970 we went to Colombia, still in a 'partnership', this time starting an anthropological documentary series *Disappearing World* for Granada TV. By now we had a baby son, so I ran Brian's base camp in Bogota organizing logistics for three films, along with childcare, and in between fitted in my own fieldwork in a Bogota market. Finally, I accomplished my need *to find an activity of my own*,<sup>43</sup> to the envy of the incorporated wives of diplomats and Shell Petroleum, who I met in Bogota. To their dismay, I refused to join the British Embassy Ladies Committee preparing the annual Christmas Party, saying I was doing fieldwork, keeping up my own work even if part-time. Only later in the 1980s when I totally withdrew from this 'partnership' role did Brian really recognise this 'hidden service'—and I am sure his institution never did.

## Final comment

Was I an incorporated wife, and how did this affect my concept of ownership of the film? In the 1960s telly world, where taking your wife with you was a complete anomaly, Granada played no direct part in constructing my identity as the wife of an employee. Nevertheless, the social character ascribed to me was a function of my husband's identity.

While I remain grateful for the opportunity that the Bolivian experience provided, and exhilarated by the events in which I participated, I now realize that I was somewhat delusional in considering this a ‘partnership’ in which I participated in an exciting ‘mutually cherished cause’.

If the enterprise was the film, perhaps in today’s world I would be more assertive in ‘owning’ it, in terms of the impact it had on my Latin American politicization, on my emerging recognition of the importance of a feminist identity during the subsequent years, and my interest in women combatants. But as a young woman in the 1960s, I just felt I was fortunate to have this opportunity. Is it beyond the realm of reason to consider that, at a totally different level, even as a real revolutionary, or as a career spy, Tania too may have felt as a incorporated wife in the 1960s—going into Bolivia incognito to set up the logistical base for the guerilla ‘foci’, and tragically ending her life ignominiously as a courier who got caught behind the lines. As a woman, Tania’s identity and significance in the Che Guevara narrative were marginalized. Largely dismissed amid the later international celebration of ‘Che’s’ heroism, were her socks a metaphorical symbol of the role she played in what was undoubtedly one of the defining events of the twentieth century?

## Notes

1. <https://frontlineclub.com>.
2. Hillary Callan and Shirley Ardener, *The Incorporated Wife* (London: Routledge, 1984).
3. Hillary Callan, ‘Introduction’, in *The Incorporated Wife*, ed. Hillary Callan and Shirley Ardener (London: Routledge, 1984), 1.
4. Shirley Ardener, ‘Preface’, in *The Incorporated Wife*, ed. Hillary Callan and Shirley Ardener (London: Routledge, 1984), i.
5. Ardener, ‘Preface’, ii.
6. Callan, ‘Introduction’, 1.
7. Ardener, ‘Preface’, i.
8. For instance, football wives, such as Wayne Rooney’s wife, Colleen Rooney, can be seen as an example of a contemporary ‘incorporated wife’, who has launched a media career, and become an influencer, and therefore is very visible.
9. Callan, ‘Introduction’, 13–14.
10. Mona Macmillan, ‘Camp Followers: A Note on the Wives of the Armed Services’, in *The Incorporated Wife*, ed. Hillary Callan and Shirley Ardener (London: Routledge, 1984).
11. Beverley Gatrell, ‘Colonial Wives; Villains or Victims’, in *The Incorporated Wife*, ed. Hillary Callan and Shirley Ardener (London: Routledge, 1984).
12. Deborah Kirkwood, ‘Settler Wives in Southern Rhodesia’, in *The Incorporated Wife*, ed. Hillary Callan and Shirley Ardener (London: Routledge, 1984), 162.
13. Ardener, ‘Preface’, ii.
14. Callan, ‘Introduction’, 14.
15. Ardener, ‘Preface’, ii.
16. Macmillan, ‘Camp Followers’.
17. Kirkwood, ‘Settler Wives in Southern Rhodesia’.
18. Callan, ‘Introduction’, 2.
19. My observation was reaffirmed by a 1975 ACTT report demonstrating that ‘sixty per cent of the union’s female members were concentrated in just three of the 150 possible grades: secretary, continuity girl and production assistant’. Cited in Vanessa Jackson, ‘There is Still Some Work to be Done, but We’ve Come a Long Way’: The Changing Position of Women in Technical Television Jobs’, *Women’s History Review* 31, no. 4 (2022): 672.

20. As similarly described in the case of 'Shell Wives'. See Soraya Tremayne, 'Shell Wives in Limbo', in *The Incorporated Wife*, ed. Hillary Callen and Shirley Ardener (London: Routledge, 1984), 123.
21. *The Guardian*, Obituary, 28th August 2006,
22. Brian Moser, conversation with the author, August 1967, La Paz Bolivia,
23. Brian Moser, conversation with the author, October 2022, Dorset, UK,
24. Vanessa Jackson describes similar nurturing/caring supportive role of women working in different TV jobs. See Jackson, 'There is Still Some Work to be Done', 678.
25. In the same way, colonial farmers' wives in Southern Rhodesia described their marriages as a 'joint enterprise'. See Kirkwood, 'Settler Wives in Southern Rhodesia', 134,
26. Regis Debray, *Revolution in the Revolution* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1967).
27. Cited in John Lee Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life* (New York: Grove Press, 1997), 716.
28. Richard Gott, *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1970).
29. Ciro Bustos, *Che Wants to See You* (London: Verso, 2013).
30. This famous nightclub was established by Swiss musician, Gilbert Favre, who as a founder member of the group of musicians, *Los Jairas*, helped popularize Bolivian folk music.
31. Comments translated from Spanish soundtrack, *End of a Revolution?* World in Action, Granada TV, Nov. 1967.
32. As fate would have it, in 1973 this kind man, Henrichsen, was killed, tragically shot dead in the face on film, while documenting an attempted *coup de état* against President Allende in Santiago.
33. A person, especially an American, who is not Hispanic or Latino, Wikipedia.
34. Personal recall.
35. The high plateau.
36. Gott, *Guerrilla Movements in Latin America*, 314.
37. Marta Rojas and Mirta Rodriguez Calderon, *Tania* (London: Ocean Books Ltd, 1970), 1.
38. Ulises Estrada, *Tania: Undercover with Che Guevara in Bolivia* (Melbourne: Ocean Press, 2005).
39. Anderson, *Che Guevara: A Revolutionary Life*.
40. Caroline Moser and Fiona Clark, *Como Evaluamos las Iniciativas de Mujeres por la Paz en Colombia?* (Bogotá: Asdi/Banco Mundial, 2003).
41. Caroline Moser, Angelica Acosta, and Maria Eugenia Vasquez, *Mujeres y Paz, Construcción de Consensos* (Bogota: Social Policy International, 2006).
42. Maria Eugenia Vasquez, *My Life as a Colombian Revolutionary* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2005).
43. Gatrell, 'Colonial Wives; Villains or Victims', 170.

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