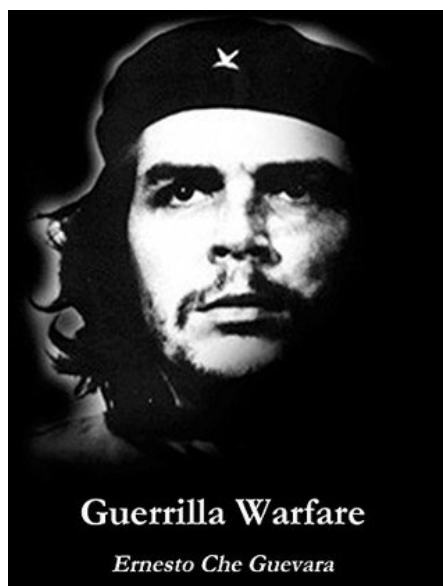




Guerrilla Warfare

Ernesto Che Guevara

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Guerrilla Warfare by the revolutionary Che Guevara has become the guidebook for thousands of guerrilla fighters in various countries around the world. Guevara intended it to be a manual on guerrilla warfare, as inspiration for revolutionary movements in Latin America, Africa and Asia, stressing the need for an underpinning political motivation to guerrilla methods, organisation and supply. Guevara emphasizes that guerrilla warfare is a favorable method against totalitarian regimes, where political opposition and legal civil struggle is impossible to conduct.

Guerrilla Warfare Details

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Roisin says

This book is a series of documents the first written in 1960, the last a pamphlet published in English a few months before Che Guevara was killed, a South American revolutionary and hero.

The book looks at guerrilla warfare in particular fighting in places of a similar landscape to South America and elsewhere. He talks about tactics and how to survive as a fighter which clearly comes from experience. He extols the rights of ordinary people to rule themselves and not to be lead by colonialists, with poor attitudes (in particular America) towards native, indigenous people and those who may be very or slightly left of centre in thought. He envisioned socialist revolution not only happening throughout South America, but also in Africa.

With America's current policy to continue to fund organisations and dictators that attack socialist, democratically elected governments, or left-wing groups in countries across the world, (e.g.Venezuela, Morocco, Nicaragua, Ethiopia, Egypt, the list over the last 40-50 years is endless), these essays would feel fresh and still relevant, if it wasn't for the change in technology and how warfare is fought now. Some parts feel dated because of this.

Che could never anticipate the importance of aircraft technology, which he is dismissive about, or the use of drones in our digital age. He writes with passion, sometimes dry and is idealistic, but sometimes realism enters advocating rules and certain behaviour. Like law-breaking soldiers in 'Goodbye To All That' by Robert Graves, guerrilla fighters too must be disciplined when necessary, with a chilling example. Che advocates female fighters and the benefits of this among ways to live, ways to fight and how to survive in difficult terrains. Here we can learn what it takes to be a fighter and how one thinks.

When Che went to Bolivia he wasn't expecting a well equipped US, CIA trained army. He was killed by such fighters in 1967. His last words were supposed to be, "I know you've come to kill me. Shoot coward, you are only going to kill a man." Whatever the truth, the man is dead, yet the legend lives on in the hearts and minds of would be revolutionaries throughout the world. A chilling and fascinating read.

Matt says

This is a small book of 175 pages, and it serves as a good background book wherever guerrilla warfare was the main tactic. For example, any book on the revolution in Nicaragua. Che Guevara was a national hero here, and you see him in many places. With this book, you can also better visualize how the guerrillas fought, and the actual mindset and the living conditions of the guerrilla revolutionaries. I learned so many things I didn't know about them. For example, a guerrilla unit cannot survive without the popular support of the people. They are the people's army, and they operate best in rural areas where there is lots of forest cover. I also did not know guerrillas slept in hammocks!

I originally bought this book because I felt inspired by one of Che Guevara's quotes, but it turned out to be completely from what I was expecting, which is okay because it helped me to form a more detailed picture of the Revolution in Nicaragua.

This book still contains practical information. Engage the enemy only when you know you will win. Always make sure that when you engage the enemy, that you will capture enough ammunition to replace what was expended. Keep civilian casualties at a minimum; these are your allies and when acts of sabotage are needed, carry them out where they hurt the enemy and not the local population. Do not blow up a soft drink factory; it serves no military purpose concentrate on what feeds you enemy: Power plants, ammunition factories, and places that produce war material.

Guerrilla Warfare is an idealist type of book. It instructs on what makes a guerrilla a hero and leaves out what happens when things go wrong. It is written to make fighting an oppressor morally right and a noble cause. Guevara insists that outside government forces and influence should be kept out of the struggle. Why change from one master for another? In keeping with that theme, he does not mention communism or socialism. Interesting too, Yankee and Soviets are only mentioned twice. America, when used, refers to the hemisphere and not the US. A dated read in technology, but the marketing it still rings true. Selling an idea is not much different from selling a product. Perhaps Che was a bit more of a capitalist than he thought.

Alberto Garcia Hernandez says

El Che relata en modo de "manual" como debe construirse una guerrilla para luchar contra un ejército opresor. En ocasiones en mucha profundidad, indicando que deben llevar los guerrilleros en la mochila o como castigarlos por mal comportamiento, pero también habla sobre las tácticas militares, como establecer relaciones con la población rural civil o cómo organizar el abastecimiento de recursos para los guerrilleros.

Ayushman says

This is a good operational manual on conducting guerrilla warfare. The author however relies too much on the ability of the revolutionaries to win the population over to the cause and was probably why he was unsuccessful and killed in Bolivia.

Always carry salt and shoes.

Hadrian says

As out of date as this book is, it is still of use for a historical and psychological look at the tactics of the guerrilla warrior.

Che's basic principles are simple - any guerrilla force, if properly trained and motivated and with popular support, can overthrow an unpopular repressive government and replace it with one which represents the popular will. Che's record was 1 for 3. Cuba being an unequivocal success, with the Congo less so, and Bolivia ending in his own death.

Some of his principles on tactics are long since out of date. The US Army no longer uses M1 Garands. Any practitioner of night warfare must note its difficulty ever since the invention of night-vision goggles, IR vision, and satellite imagery. However, some were out of date even on publication. I doubt that napalm and air strikes are an 'inconvenience'.

Nevertheless, many broad principles remain true. Become popular with the people through propaganda and good behavior. Move constantly. Out-endure the enemy, fire up the grievances against them. Attack supply lines and convoys with explosives.

What, then, is a counter-insurgent to do against such an army? I, a mere student of humanity, offer these few scattered suggestions.

- Maintain positive relations with the population at ALL COSTS
- Establish areas where the population feels secure, and systematically expand them
- Substantively address any economic/social grievances through investment in infrastructure, education, etc.
- Have a means for the population to voice grievances peacefully (democracy)
- Have competent governance
- Have a solid and reliable means of gathering intelligence, whether HUMINT, SIGINT, or alternates
- Have total control of the air
- Establish basic economic services, make the people feel more secure with the counterinsurgency present

All easier said than done. And what should the counterinsurgency avoid?

- Do NOT have an external occupier as the main force for counterinsurgency (See the average Libyan's view of the United States versus the average Afghan's)
- Do NOT coerce or intimidate the people
- Do NOT cause excess collateral damage
- Do NOT loot/steal/pillage supplies from the local population (Ex: See the 'Three-Alls' policy of the Imperial Japanese Army for what not to do)
- Do NOT forcibly move/resettle the civilian population. This will stir up resentment
- Failure in adapting to changes in tactics, communication, propaganda
- Above all, do NOT make your force appear to be the greater threat than the insurgents are.

For all of the book's flaws, it is still an interesting read - the psychology and the mind of the resistance fighter is similar, although the tactics are long since changed.

Nick Black says

Read during my early teenage revolutionary days, and largely what put an end to them -- it became clear that revolution was a dirty, cold business most unlike a video game, largely the interest of people I'd likely despise and be despised by. I couldn't agree more with another reviewer -- this book is more of a historical relic than any relevant manual. I'd add, though, that it's important insight into the tumult of revolutionary Central and South America from the 50's through the 70's, and perhaps even useful to understand some modern leaders (although assuming overmuch insight would be more dangerous than anything).

Frank says

Many college kids have the classic image of Che Guevara either posted on their wall or t-shirt as a symbol of revolution and non-conformism, but few really know much about him. This book is his 1960 detailing of how to fight a populist guerrilla war against a powerful government. I got it while I was in Army basic training from the PX and my drill sergeants almost flipped out when they found it in my locker. It's more useful as an understanding of this type of warfare, than a how-to, though if you ever wanted to know how to

make a shotgun propelled Molotov cocktail, there is a nice diagram included. This book helped shape my thinking about terrorism as a guerrilla tactic, not something you can actually have a war against, and how guerrilla groups need support from the local populations to survive, which is why it was critical to treat those people with utmost respect, and is something I tried to do while I was In Iraq.

Tasfia says

Well I kinda skim read it... BUT the parts that I did read were actually quite interesting. I didn't know there were so many ways to plan surprise attacks, but now that I do... y'all better watch your back :P

Matt says

A pretty good how-to manual, written 58 years ago.

Most would still stand true today, apart from the difficulty of communications - cell and satellite phones would transform that problem of laying miles of cables through jungles; yet would also make it near impossible to disrupt the established army's lines.

I think Che alive today would be most shocked at how true his prediction was, that one of the biggest threats to The People was not the massive corrupt governments of the world, but the growth in power of the monopolistic capitalist corporations, which don't just have askew morals, they have none.

sologdin says

Similar to Mao's treatise on guerrilla warfare, this one provides more pragmatic considerations than something like Sun Tzu (but, then again, there's nothing quite like Master Sun).

This text includes a somewhat sympathetic introductory essay by a guy who advances a lukewarm critique of Guevara's foco theory of warfare, which is discredited by the mere fact of Guevara's death while enacting same in Bolivia. Fair enough.

The text itself of the *Guerrilla Warfare* is likewise accompanied by two essays, not of doctrinal, but of historical value, "Guerrilla Warfare: A Method" and "Message to the Tricontinental."

The main essay extracts three basic propositions from the Cuban Revolution and seeks to generalize them: guerrillas can defeat regular militaries; the guerrillas can create marxism's objective revolutionary conditions; and rural areas are the principal theatre of armed operations, all enunciated on page one, and developed thereafter with some rigor.

The text carries out polemics, mostly sub rosa to the non-leftist, with various schools of leftwing thought, including both ultraleftists and proto-reformist liberal types.

Douchebags like to accuse Guevara of being a murderer. Maybe so--but not on the basis of this text, which intones: "Where a government has come into power through some form of popular vote, fraudulent or not, and maintains at least an appearance of constitutional legality, the guerrilla outbreak cannot be promoted, since the possibilities of peaceful struggle have not yet been exhausted." My own position is that fraudulent

elections authorize a violent response by the electorate against the state (or the authors of the fraud, anyway, if distinct from the state), but I suppose Mr. Guevara is a pacifist in comparison to reckless losers like me.

There is little concern with Clauswitzian analysis here--no center of gravity; rather, the guerrilla objective is to completely destroy the state's military power. The end goal is always the assumption of political power on behalf of the working peoples (here, the rural proletariat and the peasants, who are the principal audience of Guevara's ideas).

For topical interest only, there's a nice set of distinctions regarding sabotage & terrorism; the former is unequivocally valuable when the target is correct ("ridiculous to carry out sabotage against a soft drink factory"--which, incidentally, some maoists actually did a few years back in Nepal--WTF? YOU DIDNT NOT REDES GAVARA!!!), whereas the latter is valueless in its indiscriminate forms, and possesses value only to the extent that "it is used to put to death some noted leader of the oppressing forces well known for his cruelty, his efficiency in repression, or some other quality." I one-up Mr. Guevara by noting that his sole example of approved "terrorism" is actually assassination, which is quite a bit different.

There's a more conceptually, plus much detailed discussion of being part of a guerrilla group. I liked the "suburban warfare" section, and it's nice to see his cutesy diagrams of how to make a molotov cocktain gun.

Recommended highly for leftists, peasants, and college students suffering from ennui.

Peter says

No sé exactamente como este libro llego a mi lista de "To-Read", pero allí estaba.

Me ha sorprendido gratamente, al principio parecía que iba a ser una sencilla guía sobre como montaron la guerrilla en Cuba y a partir de ella crear las bases para futuras revoluciones, pero aparte de eso el Che muestra una gran conocimiento sobre el cuerpo humano y la mente (se me había olvidado por un momento que se graduó en Medicina en Argentina) que incluso son más sencillos y correctos que los que tiene la gente de ese campo en nuestros tiempos.

Dudo que alguien pueda sacar la utilidad para que este libro fue escrito, pero en este se puede ver las ideas que movieron al Che junto con los hermanos Castro ha encabezar la revolución cubana.

¿Qué sería del Che si estuviera vivo? ¿Renegaría de sus ideales al ver las consecuencias reales para la gente o seguiría convencido en ellas?

Andy Carrington says

My mate's Commie mum lent it some 6 years ago. I want it back...
